

OPEN MEETINGS ACT HANDBOOK



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The Handbook is intended to be a quick reference guide. It is not intended to be encyclopedic on every subject or resolve every situation that may be encountered.

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OPEN MEETINGS ACT

THE BASICS

The Act – the Open Meetings Act (OMA) is 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.261 through 15.275. The OMA took effect January 1, 1977. In enacting the OMA, the Legislature promoted a new era in governmental accountability and fostered openness in government to enhance responsible decision making.¹

Nothing in the OMA prohibits a public body from adopting an ordinance, resolution, rule, or charter provision that requires a greater degree of openness relative to public body meetings than the standards provided for in the OMA.²

What bodies are covered? – the OMA applies to all meetings of a public body.³ A "public body" is broadly defined as:

[A]ny state or local legislative or governing body, including a board, commission, committee, subcommittee, authority, or council, that is empowered by state constitution, statute, charter, ordinance, resolution, or rule to *exercise governmental or proprietary authority or perform a governmental or proprietary function*; a lessee of such a body performing an essential public purpose and function pursuant to the lease agreement.⁴ [Emphasis added.]

As used in the OMA, the term "public body" connotes a collective entity and does not include an individual government official.⁵ The OMA does not apply to private, nonprofit corporations.⁶

Public notice requirements – a meeting of a public body cannot be held unless public notice is given consistent with the OMA.⁷ A public notice must contain the public body's name, telephone number, and address, and must be posted at its principal office and any other locations

¹ *Booth Newspapers, Inc v Univ of Michigan Bd of Regents*, 444 Mich 211, 222-223; 507 NW2d 422 (1993).

² MCL 15.261.

³ MCL 15.263. When the Handbook refers to a "board," the term encompasses all boards, commissions, councils, authorities, committees, subcommittees, panels, and any other public body.

⁴ MCL 15.262(a). The provision in the OMA that includes a lessee of a public body performing an essential public purpose is unconstitutional because the title of the act does not refer to organizations other than "public bodies." OAG, 1977-1978, No 5207, p 157 (June 24, 1977). Certain boards are excluded "when deliberating the merits of a case." MCL 15.263(7). See also MCL 15.263(8) and (10).

⁵ *Herald Co v Bay City*, 463 Mich 111, 129-133; 614 NW2d 873 (2000) – a city manager is not subject to the OMA. *Craig v Detroit Public Schools Chief Executive Officer*, 265 Mich App 572, 579; 697 NW2d 529 (2005). OAG, 1977-1978, No 5183A, p 97 (April 18, 1977).

⁶ OAG, 1985-1986, No 6352, p 252 (April 8, 1986) – the Michigan High School Athletic Association is not subject to the OMA. See also *Perlongo v Iron River Cooperative TV Antenna Corp*, 122 Mich App 433; 332 NW2d 502 (1983).

⁷ MCL 15.265(1). *Nicholas v Meridian Charter Twp*, 239 Mich App 525, 531; 609 NW2d 574 (2000).

the public body considers appropriate.⁸ If a public body is a part of a state department, a public notice must also be posted in the principal office of the state department.⁹

Public notice requirements are specific to the type of meeting:

- (1) For regular meetings of a public body, there shall be posted within 10 days after the first meeting of the public body in each calendar or fiscal year a public notice stating the dates, times, and places of its regular meetings.
- (2) For a change in schedule of regular meetings of a public body, there shall be posted within three days after the meeting at which the change is made, a public notice stating the new dates, times, and places of its regular meetings.
- (3) For a rescheduled regular or a special meeting of a public body, a public notice stating the date, time, and place of the meeting shall be posted at least 18 hours before the meeting.
- (4) A meeting of a public body which is recessed for more than 36 hours shall be reconvened only after public notice has been posted at least 18 hours before the reconvened meeting.¹⁰

At their first meeting of the calendar or fiscal year, each board must set the dates, times, and places of the board's regular meetings for the coming year. The OMA does not require any particular number of meetings. The board's schedule of regular meetings is not, of course, set in stone. The board is free to cancel or reschedule its meetings.

The minimum 18-hour notice requirement is not fulfilled if the public is denied access to the notice of the meeting for any part of the 18 hours.¹¹ The requirement may be met by posting at least 18 hours in advance of the meeting using a method designed to assure access to the notice. For example, the public body can post the notice at the main entrance visible on the outside of the building that houses the principal office of the public body.¹²

A public body must send copies of the public notices by first class mail to a requesting party, upon the party's payment of a yearly fee of not more than the reasonable estimated cost of printing and postage. Upon written request, a public body, at the same time a public notice of a meeting is posted, must provide a copy of the public notice to any newspaper published in the state or any radio or television station located in the state, free of charge.¹³

⁸ MCL 15.264(a)-(c).

⁹ MCL 15.264(c).

¹⁰ MCL 15.265(2)-(5).

¹¹ OAG, 1979-1980, No 5724, p 840 (June 20, 1980).

¹² OAG No 5724.

¹³ MCL 15.266.

Agendas and the OMA – while the OMA requires a public body to give public notice when it meets, it has no requirement that the public notice include an agenda or a specific statement as to the purpose of a meeting.¹⁴ No agenda format is required by the OMA.¹⁵

Penalties for OMA violations – a public official who "intentionally violates" the OMA may be found guilty of a misdemeanor¹⁶ and may be personally liable for actual and exemplary damages of not more than \$500 for a single meeting.¹⁷ The exemptions in the OMA must be strictly construed. The "rule of lenity" (i.e., courts should mitigate punishment when the punishment in the criminal statute is unclear) does not apply to construction of the OMA's exemptions.¹⁸

A decision made by a public body may be invalidated by a court, if the public body has not complied with the requirements of MCL 15.263(1), (2), and (3) [i.e., making decisions at a public meeting] or if failure to give notice in accordance with section 5 has interfered with substantial compliance with MCL 15.263(1), (2), and (3) and the court finds that the noncompliance has impaired the rights of the public under the OMA.

Lawsuits to compel compliance – actions must be brought within 60 days after the public body's approved minutes involving the challenged decision are made publicly available.¹⁹ If the decision involves the approval of contracts, the receipt or acceptance of bids, or the procedures pertaining to the issuance of bonds or other evidences of indebtedness, the action must be brought within 30 days after the approved minutes are made publicly available.²⁰ If the decision of a state public body is challenged, venue is in Ingham County.²¹

Correcting non-conforming decisions – in any case where a lawsuit has been initiated to invalidate a public body's decision on the ground that it was not made in conformity with the OMA, the public body may, without being deemed to make any admission contrary to its interest, reenact the disputed decision in conformity with the OMA. A decision reenacted in this manner shall be effective from the date of reenactment and is not rendered invalid by any deficiency in its initial enactment.²² If the board acts quickly, the reenactment may defeat a claim for attorney's fees, since plaintiffs would not be successful in "obtaining relief in the action" within the meaning of the OMA.²³

¹⁴ OAG, 1993-1994, No 6821, p 199 (October 18, 1994). But, as discussed in OAG No 6821, other statutes may require a public body to state in its notice the business to be transacted at the meeting.

¹⁵ *Lysogorski v Bridgeport Charter Twp*, 256 Mich App 297, 299; 662 NW2d 108 (2003).

¹⁶ MCL 15.272.

¹⁷ MCL 15.273.

¹⁸ *People v Whitney*, 228 Mich App 230, 244; 578 NW2d 329 (1998).

¹⁹ MCL 15.270(3)(a).

²⁰ MCL 15.270(3)(b).

²¹ MCL 15.270(4).

²² MCL 15.270(5).

²³ *Leemreis v Sherman Twp*, 273 Mich App 691, 700; 731 NW2d 787 (2007). *Felice v Cheboygan County Zoning Comm*, 103 Mich App 742, 746; 304 NW2d 1 (1981).

DECISIONS MUST BE MADE IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

All decisions must be made at a meeting open to the public – the OMA defines "decision" to mean "a determination, action, vote, or disposition upon a motion, proposal, recommendation, resolution, order, ordinance, bill, or measure on which a vote by members of a public body is required and by which a public body effectuates or formulates public policy."²⁴ The OMA provides that "[a]ll decisions of a public body shall be made at a meeting open to the public," and that, with limited exceptions, "[a]ll deliberations of a public body constituting a quorum of its members shall take place at a meeting open to the public."²⁵

The OMA does not contain a "voting requirement" or any form of "formal voting requirement." A "consensus building process" that equates to decision-making would fall under the act.²⁶ For example, where board members use telephone calls or sub-quorum meetings to achieve the same intercommunication that could have been achieved in a full board or commission meeting, the members' conduct is susceptible to "round-the-horn" decision-making, which achieves the same effect as if the entire board had met publicly and formally cast its votes. A "round-the-horn" process violates the OMA.²⁷

Meeting "informally" to discuss matters – while the OMA "does not apply to a meeting which is a social or chance gathering or conference not designed to avoid this act,"²⁸ a meeting of a public body must be open to the public. The OMA does not define the terms "social or chance gathering" or "conference," and provides little direct guidance as to the precise scope of this exemption.²⁹ To promote openness in government, however, the OMA is entitled to a broad interpretation and exceptions to conduct closed sessions must be construed strictly.³⁰ Thus, the closed session exception does not apply to a quorum of a public body that meets to discuss matters of public policy, even if there is no intention that the deliberations will lead to a decision on that occasion.³¹

Canvassing board members on how they might vote – an informal canvas by one member of a public body to find out where the votes would be on a particular issue does not violate the OMA,

²⁴ MCL 15.262(d).

²⁵ MCL 15.263(2) and (3).

²⁶ *Booth Newspapers, Inc v Univ of Michigan Bd of Regents*, 444 Mich at 229.

²⁷ *Booth Newspapers, Inc*, 444 Mich at 229 – "any alleged distinction between the [public body's] consensus building and a determination or action, as advanced in the OMA's definition of 'decision,' is a distinction without a difference."

²⁸ MCL 15.263(10).

²⁹ OAG, 1981-1982, No 6074, p 662, 663 (June 11, 1982).

³⁰ *Wexford County Prosecutor v Pranger*, 83 Mich App 197, 201, 204; 268 NW2d 344 (1978).

³¹ OAG, 1977-1978, No 5298, p 434, 435 (May 2, 1978). See also OAG, 1979-1980, No 5444, p 55, 56 (February 21, 1979) – anytime a quorum of a public body meets and considers a matter of public policy, the meeting must comply with the OMA's requirements. Compare OAG, 1979-1980, No 5437, p 36, 37 (February 2, 1979), where members of a public body constituting a quorum come together by chance, the gathering is exempt from the OMA; however, even at a chance meeting, matters of public policy may not be discussed by the members with each other.

so long as no decisions are made during the discussions and the discussions are not a deliberate attempt to avoid the OMA.³²

May a quorum of a board gather outside an open meeting without violating the OMA? – yes, in some instances. In addition to a purely social gathering or chance gathering³³ that does not involve discussions of public policy among the members of the board, a quorum may accept an invitation to address a civic organization,³⁴ listen to the concerns of a neighborhood organization, or observe demonstrations, if the board doesn't deliberate toward, or make, a decision.³⁵

A board quorum also may meet for a workshop, seminar, informational gathering, or professional conference designed to convey, to the conference participants, information about areas of professional interest common to all conference participants.³⁶ These kinds of meetings involve a conference designed primarily to provide training or background information and involve a relatively broad focus upon issues of general concern, rather than a more limited focus on matters or issues of particular interest to a single public body.³⁷ However, when gatherings are designed to receive input from officers or employees of the public body, the OMA requires that the gathering be held at a public meeting.³⁸

The OMA was not violated when several members of the board of county commissioners attended a public meeting of the county planning committee (which had more than fifty members, two who were county commissioners), which resulted in a quorum of the board being present at the meeting (without the meeting also being noticed as a county commission meeting), so long as the nonmember commissioners did not engage in deliberations or render decisions.³⁹

Advisory committees and the OMA – the OMA does not apply to committees and subcommittees composed of less than a quorum of the full public body if they "are merely advisory or only capable of making 'recommendations concerning the exercise of governmental authority.'"⁴⁰

Where, on the other hand, a committee or subcommittee is empowered to act on matters in such a fashion as to deprive the full public body of the opportunity to consider a matter, a decision of the committee or subcommittee "is an exercise of governmental authority which effectuates

³² *St Aubin v Ishpeming City Council*, 197 Mich App 100, 103; 494 NW2d 803 (1992).

³³ OAG, 1979-1980, No 5437, p 36 (February 2, 1979).

³⁴ OAG, 1977-1978, No 5183, p 21, 35 (March 8, 1977).

³⁵ OAG, 1977-1978, No 5364, p 606, 607 (September 7, 1978).

³⁶ OAG, 1979-1980, No 5433, p 29, 31 (January 31, 1979).

³⁷ OAG, 1981-1982, No 6074, at p 664.

³⁸ OAG No 5433 at p 31.

³⁹ OAG, 1989-1990, No 6636, p 253 (October 23, 1989), cited with approval in *Ryant v Cleveland Twp*, 239 Mich App 430, 434-435; 608 NW2d 101 (2000) and *Nicholas v Meridian Charter Twp*, 239 Mich App at 531-532. If, however, the noncommittee board members participate in committee deliberations, the OMA would be violated. *Nicholas*, 239 Mich App at 532.

⁴⁰ OAG, 1997-1998, No 6935, p 18 (April 2, 1997); OAG No 5183 at p 40.

public policy" and the committee or subcommittee proceedings are, therefore, subject to the OMA.⁴¹

If a joint meeting of two committees of a board (each with less than a quorum of the board) results in the presence of a quorum of the board, the board must comply in all respects with the OMA and notice of the joint meeting must include the fact that a quorum of the board will be present.⁴²

Use of e-mail or other electronic communications among board members during an open meeting – e-mail, texting, or other forms of electronic communications among members of a board or commission during the course of an open meeting that constitutes deliberations toward decision-making or actual decisions violates the OMA, since it is in effect a "closed" session. While the OMA does not require that all votes by a public body must be by roll call, voting requirements under the act are met when a vote is taken by roll call, show of hands, or other method that informs the public of the public official's decision rendered by his or her vote. Thus, the OMA bars the use of e-mail or other electronic communications to conduct a secret ballot at a public meeting, since it would prevent citizens from knowing how members of the public body have voted.⁴³

Moreover, the use of electronic communications for discussions or deliberations, which are not, at a minimum, able to be heard by the public in attendance at an open meeting are contrary to the OMA's core purpose – the promotion of openness in government.⁴⁴

Using e-mail to distribute handouts, agenda items, statistical information, or other such material during an open meeting should be permissible under the OMA, particularly when copies of that information are also made available to the public before or during the meeting.

⁴¹ *Schmiedicke v Clare School Bd*, 228 Mich App 259, 261, 263-264; 577 NW2d 706 (1998); *Morrison v East Lansing*, 255 Mich App 505; 660 NW2d 395 (2003); and OAG, 1997-1998, No 7000, p 197 (December 1, 1998) – a committee composed of less than a quorum of a full board is subject to the OMA, if the committee is effectively authorized to determine whether items will or will not be referred for action by the full board, citing OAG, 1977-1978, No 5222, p 216 (September 1, 1977).

⁴² OAG, 1989-1990, No 6636, at p 254.

⁴³ See *Esperance v Chesterfield Twp*, 89 Mich App 456, 464; 280 NW2d 559 (1979) and OAG, 1977-1978, No 5262, p 338 (January 31, 1978).

⁴⁴ See *Booth Newspapers, Inc*, 444 Mich at 229; *Schmiedicke*, 228 Mich App at 263, 264; and *Wexford County Prosecutor*, 83 Mich App at 204.

CLOSED SESSIONS

Meeting in closed session – a public body may meet in a closed session *only* for one or more of the permitted purposes specified in section 8 of the OMA.⁴⁵ The limited purposes for which closed sessions are permitted include, among others⁴⁶:

- (1) To consider the dismissal, suspension, or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, or to consider a periodic personnel evaluation of, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent, *if the named person requests a closed hearing*.⁴⁷
- (2) For strategy and negotiation sessions connected with the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement *if either negotiating party requests a closed hearing*.⁴⁸
- (3) To consider the purchase or lease of real property up to the time an option to purchase or lease that real property is obtained.⁴⁹
- (4) To consult with its attorney regarding trial or settlement strategy in connection with specific pending litigation, *but only if an open meeting* would have a detrimental financial effect on the litigating or settlement position of the public body.⁵⁰
- (5) To review and consider the contents of an application for employment or appointment to a public office *if the candidate requests that the application remain confidential*. However, all interviews by a public body for employment or appointment to a public office shall be held in an open meeting pursuant to this act.⁵¹
- (6) To consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute.⁵² But note – a board is not permitted to go into closed session to discuss an attorney's oral opinion, as opposed to a written legal memorandum.⁵³

A closed session must be conducted during the course of an open meeting – section 2(c) of the OMA defines "closed session" as "a meeting or part of a meeting of a public body that is

⁴⁵ MCL 15.268. OAG, 1977-1978, No 5183, at p 37.

⁴⁶ The other permissible purposes deal with public primary, secondary, and post-secondary student disciplinary hearings – section 8(b); state legislature party caucuses – section 8(g); compliance conferences conducted by the Michigan Department of Community Health – section 8(i); and public university presidential search committee discussions – section 8(j).

⁴⁷ MCL 15.268(a) (Emphasis added.)

⁴⁸ MCL 15.268(c) (Emphasis added.)

⁴⁹ MCL 15.268(d).

⁵⁰ MCL 15.268(e) (Emphasis added.)

⁵¹ MCL 15.268(f) (Emphasis added.)

⁵² MCL 15.268(h).

⁵³ *Booth Newspapers, Inc v Wyoming City Council*, 168 Mich App 459, 467, 469-470; 425 NW2d 695 (1988).

closed to the public."⁵⁴ Section 9(1) of the OMA provides that the minutes of an open meeting must include "the purpose or purposes for which a closed session is held."⁵⁵

Going into closed session – section 7(1) of the OMA⁵⁶ sets out the procedure for calling a closed session:

A 2/3 roll call vote of members elected or appointed and serving is required to call a closed session, except for the closed sessions permitted under section 8(a), (b), (c), (g), (i), and (j). The roll call vote and the purpose or purposes for calling the closed session shall be entered into the minutes of the meeting at which the vote is taken.

Thus, a public body may go into closed session only upon a motion duly made, seconded, and adopted by a 2/3 roll call vote of the members appointed and serving⁵⁷ during an open meeting for the purpose of (1) considering the purchase or lease of real property, (2) consulting with their attorney, (3) considering an employment application, or (4) considering material exempt from disclosure under state or federal law. A majority vote is sufficient for going into closed session for the other OMA permitted purposes.

We suggest that every motion to go into closed session should cite one or more of the permissible purposes listed in section 8 of the OMA.⁵⁸ An example of a motion to go into closed session is:

I move that the Board meet in closed session under section 8(e) of the Open Meetings Act, to consult with our attorney regarding trial or settlement strategy in connection with [the name of the specific lawsuit].

Another example is the need to privately discuss with the public body's attorney a memorandum of advice as permitted under section 8(h) of the OMA – "to consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute."⁵⁹ The motion should cite section 8(h) of the OMA and the statutory basis for the closed session, such as section 13(1)(g) of the Freedom of Information Act, which exempts from public disclosure "[i]nformation or records subject to the attorney-client privilege."⁶⁰

Leaving a closed session – the OMA is silent as to how to leave a closed session. We suggest that you recommend a motion be made to end the closed session with a majority vote needed for

⁵⁴ MCL 15.262(c).

⁵⁵ MCL 15.269(1).

⁵⁶ MCL 15.267(1).

⁵⁷ And not just those attending the meeting. OAG No 5183 at p 37.

⁵⁸ MCL 15.268.

⁵⁹ MCL 15.268(h). Proper discussion of a written legal opinion at a closed meeting is, with regard to the attorney-client privilege exemption to the OMA, limited to the meaning of any strictly legal advice presented in the written opinion. *People v Whitney*, 228 Mich App at 245-248.

⁶⁰ MCL 15.243(1)(g).

approval. Admittedly, this is a decision made in a closed session, but it certainly isn't a decision that "effectuates or formulates public policy."

When the public body has concluded its closed session, the open meeting minutes should state the time the public body reconvened in open session and, of course, any votes on matters discussed in the closed session must occur in an open meeting.

Decisions must be made during an open meeting, not the closed session – section 3(2) of the OMA requires that "[a]ll decisions of a public body shall be made at a meeting open to the public."⁶¹ Section 2(d) of the OMA defines "decision" to mean "a determination, action, vote, or disposition upon a motion, proposal, recommendation, resolution, order, ordinance, bill, or measure on which a vote by members of a public body is required and by which a public body effectuates or formulates public policy."⁶²

Avoid using the terms "closed session" and "executive session" interchangeably – we suggest that a public body not use the term "executive session" to refer to a "closed session." The term "executive session" does not appear in the OMA, but "closed session" does. "Executive session" is more of a private sector term and is often used to describe a private session of a board of directors, which is not limited as to purpose, where actions can be taken, and no minutes are recorded.

Staff and others may join the board in a closed session – a public body may rely upon its officers and employees for assistance when considering matters in a closed session. A public body may also request private citizens to assist, as appropriate, in its considerations.⁶³

Forcibly excluding persons from a closed session – a public body may, if necessary, exclude an unauthorized individual who intrudes upon a closed session by either (1) having the individual forcibly removed by a law enforcement officer, or (2) by recessing and removing the closed session to a new location.⁶⁴

⁶¹ MCL 15.263(2). *St Aubin v Ishpeming City Council*, 197 Mich App at 103. See also, OAG, 1977-1978, No 5262, at p 338-339 – the OMA prohibits a voting procedure at a public meeting which prevents citizens from knowing how members of the public body have voted and OAG, 1979-1980, No 5445, p 57 (February 22, 1979) – a public body may not take final action on any matter during a closed meeting.

⁶² MCL 15.262(d).

⁶³ OAG, 1979-1980, No 5532, p 324 (August 7, 1979).

⁶⁴ OAG, 1985-1986, No 6358, p 268 (April 29, 1986), citing *Regents of the Univ of Michigan v Washtenaw County Coalition Against Apartheid*, 97 Mich App 532; 296 NW2d 94 (1980).

PUBLIC ATTENDING OPEN MEETINGS

Excluding individuals – no one may be excluded from a meeting otherwise open to the public except for a breach of the peace actually committed at the meeting.⁶⁵

Identifying public attendees – no one may be required to register or otherwise provide his or her name or other information or otherwise to fulfill a condition precedent to attend a public meeting.⁶⁶

Building security at the meeting site may cause issues. Members of the public might object, based on the OMA, to signing in to gain access to the building where a public meeting is being held.⁶⁷ We, therefore, recommend that public bodies meet in facilities or areas not subject to public access restrictions.

If the public body wishes the members of the public to identify themselves at the meeting, we suggest the board chair announce something like this:

The Board would appreciate having the members of the public attending the meeting today identify themselves and mention if they would like the opportunity to speak during the public comment period. However, you do not need to give your name to attend this meeting. When the time comes to introduce yourself and you do not want to do so, just say pass.

Since speaking at the meeting is a step beyond "attending" the public meeting and the OMA provides that a person may address the public body "under rules established and recorded by the public body," the board may establish a rule requiring individuals to identify themselves if they wish to speak at a meeting.⁶⁸

Limiting public comment – a public body may adopt a rule imposing individual time limits for members of the public addressing the public body.⁶⁹ In order to carry out its responsibilities, the board can also consider establishing rules allowing the chairperson to encourage groups to designate one or more individuals to speak on their behalf to avoid cumulative comments. But a rule limiting the period of public comment may not be applied in a manner that denies a person the right to address the public body, such as by limiting all public comment to a half-hour period.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ MCL 15.263(6).

⁶⁶ MCL 15.263(4).

⁶⁷ In addition, "[a]ll meetings of a public body . . . shall be held in a place available to the general public." MCL 15.263(1).

⁶⁸ MCL 15.263(5). OAG, 1977-1978, No 5183, at p 34.

⁶⁹ OAG, 1977-1978, No 5332, p 536 (July 13, 1978). The rule must be duly adopted and recorded. OAG, 1977-1978, No 5183, at p 34.

⁷⁰ OAG No 5332 at p 538.

Meeting location – the OMA only requires that a meeting be held "in a place available to the general public;" it does not dictate that the meeting be held within the geographical limits of the public body's jurisdiction.⁷¹ However, if a meeting is held so far from the public which it serves that it would be difficult or inconvenient for its citizens to attend, the meeting may not be considered as being held at a place available to the general public. Whenever possible, the meeting should be held within the public body's geographical boundaries.

Timing of public comment – a public body has discretion under the OMA when to schedule public comment during the meeting.⁷² Thus, scheduling public comment at the beginning⁷³ or the end⁷⁴ of the meeting agenda does not violate the OMA. The public has no right to address the commission during its deliberations on a particular matter.⁷⁵

Taping and broadcasting – the right to attend a public meeting includes the right to tape-record, videotape, broadcast live on radio, and telecast live on television the proceedings of a public body at the public meeting.⁷⁶ A board may establish reasonable regulations governing the televising or filming by the electronic media of a hearing open to the public in order to minimize any disruption to the hearing, but it may not prohibit such coverage.⁷⁷ And the exercise of the right to tape-record, videotape, and broadcast public meetings may not be dependent upon the prior approval of the public body.⁷⁸

⁷¹ OAG, 1979-1980, No 5560, p 386 (September 13, 1979). Of course, local charter provisions or ordinances may impose geographical limits on public body meetings.

⁷² MCL 15.263(5).

⁷³ *Lysogorski v. Bridgeport Charter Twp*, 256 Mich App at 302.

⁷⁴ OAG, 1979-1980, No 5716, p 812 (June 4, 1980).

⁷⁵ OAG, 1977-1978, No 5310, p 465, 468 (June 7, 1978).

⁷⁶ MCL 15.263(1).

⁷⁷ OAG, 1987-1988, No 6499, p 280 (February 24, 1988).

⁷⁸ MCL 15.263(1).

MINUTES

What must be in the minutes – at a minimum, the minutes must show the date, time, place, members present, members absent, any decisions made at a meeting open to the public, and the purpose or purposes for which a closed session is held. The minutes must include all roll call votes taken at the meeting.⁷⁹ The OMA does not prohibit a public body from preparing a more detailed set of minutes of its public meetings if it chooses to do so.⁸⁰

When must the minutes be available – proposed minutes must be made available for public inspection within eight days after the applicable meeting. Approved minutes must be made available for public inspection within five days after the public body's approval.⁸¹

When must the minutes be approved – at the board's next meeting.⁸² Corrected minutes must show both the original entry and the correction (for example, using a "strikethrough" word processing feature).

Closed session minutes – a separate set of minutes must be taken for closed sessions. While closed session minutes must be approved in an open meeting (with contents of the minutes kept confidential), the board may meet in closed session to consider approving the minutes.⁸³

Closed session minutes shall only be disclosed if required by a civil action filed under sections 10, 11, or 13 of the OMA.⁸⁴ The board secretary may furnish the minutes of a closed session of the body to a board member. A member's dissemination of closed session minutes to the public, however, is a violation of the OMA, and the member risks criminal prosecution and civil penalties.⁸⁵ An audiotape of a closed session meeting of a public body is part of the minutes of the session meeting and, thus, must be filed with the clerk of the public body for retention under the OMA.⁸⁶

Closed session minutes may be destroyed one year and one day *after approval of the minutes of the regular meeting at which the closed session occurred*.⁸⁷

⁷⁹ MCL 15.269(1).

⁸⁰ Informational letter to Representative Jack Brandenburg from Chief Deputy Attorney General Carol Isaacs dated May 8, 2003.

⁸¹ MCL 15.269(3).

⁸² MCL 15.269(1).

⁸³ OAG, 1985-1986, No 6365, p 288 (June 2, 1986). This, of course, triggers the need for more closed session minutes.

⁸⁴ MCL 15.270, 15.271, and 15.273; *Local Area Watch v Grand Rapids*, 262 Mich App 136, 143; 683 NW2d 745 (2004); OAG, 1985-1986 No 6353, p 255 (April 11, 1986).

⁸⁵ OAG, 1999-2000, No 7061, p 144 (August 31, 2000).

⁸⁶ *Kitchen v Ferndale City Council*, 253 Mich App 115; 654 NW2d 918 (2002).

⁸⁷ MCL 15.267(2).

Inadvertent omissions from the minutes – the OMA does not invalidate a decision due to a simple error in the minutes, such as inadvertently omitting the vote to go into closed session from a meeting's minutes.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ *Willis v Deerfield Twp*, 257 Mich App 541, 554; 669 NW2d 279 (2003).

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES

Core principle – for the actions of a public body to be valid, they must be approved by a majority vote of a quorum, absent a controlling provision to the contrary, at a lawfully convened meeting.⁸⁹

QUORUM

Quorum – is the minimum number of members who must be present for a board to act. Any substantive action taken in the absence of a quorum is invalid. If a public body properly notices the meeting under OMA, but lacks a quorum when it actually convenes, the board members in attendance may receive reports and comments from the public or staff, ask questions, and comment on matters of interest.⁹⁰

What is the quorum? – look to the statute, charter provision, or ordinance creating the board. On the state level, the Legislature in recent years has taken care to set the board quorum in the statute itself. The statute will often provide that "a majority of the board appointed and serving shall constitute a quorum." For a 15-member board, that means eight would be the quorum, assuming you have 15 members appointed and serving. Without more in the statute, as few as five board members could then decide an issue, since they would be a majority of a quorum.⁹¹ But, be careful, recent statutes often provide that "voting upon action taken by the board shall be conducted by majority vote of the members appointed and serving." In that instance, the board needs at least eight favorable votes to act.⁹² The Legislature has a backstop statute, which provides that any provision that gives "joint authority to 3 or more public officers or other persons shall be construed as giving such authority to a majority of such officers or other persons, unless it shall be otherwise expressly declared in the law giving the authority."⁹³

Disqualified members – a member of a public body who is disqualified due to a conflict of interest may not be counted to establish a quorum to consider that matter.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ OAG, 1979-1980, No 5808, p 1060 (October 30, 1980). Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RRONR) (10th ed.), p 4. We cite to Robert's Rules in this Handbook as a leading guide on parliamentary procedures. This is not to imply that public bodies are, as a general rule, bound by Robert's Rules.

⁹⁰ OAG, 2009-2010, No 7235, p __ (October 9, 2009).

⁹¹ See OAG, 1977-1978, No 5238, p 261 (November 2, 1977).

⁹² See OAG, 1979-1980, No 5808, at p 1061.

⁹³ MCL 8.3c. *Wood v Bd of Trustees of the Policemen and Firemen Retirement System of Detroit*, 108 Mich App 38, 43; 310 NW2d 39 (1981).

⁹⁴ OAG, 1981-1982, No 5916, p 218 (June 8, 1981). But see MCL 15.342a, which provides a procedure for disqualified public officials to vote in some limited circumstances where a quorum is otherwise lacking for a public body to conduct business.

Losing a quorum – even if a meeting begins with a quorum present, the board loses its right to conduct substantive action whenever the attendance of its members falls below the necessary quorum.⁹⁵

Resigned members – the common law rule in Michigan is that a public officer's resignation is not effective until it has been accepted by the appointing authority (who, at the state level, is usually the governor). Acceptance of the resignation may be manifested by formal acceptance or by the appointment of a successor.⁹⁶ Thus, until a resignation is formally accepted or a successor appointed, the resigning member must be considered "appointed and serving," be counted for quorum purposes, and be permitted to vote.

⁹⁵ RRONR (10th ed.), p 337-338.

⁹⁶ OAG, 1985-1986, No 6405, p 429, 430 (December 9, 1986), citing *Clark v Detroit Bd of Education*, 112 Mich 656; 71 NW 177 (1897).

VOTING

Abstain – means to refuse to vote. Thus, a board member does not "vote" to abstain. If a vote requires a majority or a certain percentage of the members present for approval, an abstention has the same effect as a "no" vote.⁹⁷

Adjourning the meeting - a presiding officer cannot arbitrarily adjourn a meeting without first calling for a vote of the members present.⁹⁸

Chairperson voting – perhaps as a spillover from the well-known constitutional rule that the vice president can only vote to break a tie in the United States Senate⁹⁹ or that a legislative presiding officer usually refrains from voting unless his or her vote affects the result,¹⁰⁰ some believe that a board's presiding officer (usually, the chairperson) can only vote to break a tie. However, absent a contrary controlling provision, all board members may vote on any matter coming before a board.¹⁰¹ A board's presiding officer can't vote on a motion and then, if the vote is tied, vote to break the tie unless explicitly authorized by law.¹⁰²

Expired-term members – look first to the statute, charter provision, or ordinance creating the public body. Many statutes provide that "a member shall serve until a successor is appointed." Absent a contrary controlling provision, the general rule is that a public officer holding over after his or her term expires may continue to act until a successor is appointed and qualified.¹⁰³

Imposing a greater voting requirement – where the Legislature has required only a majority vote to act, public bodies can't impose a greater voting requirement, such as requiring a two-thirds vote of its members to alter certain policies or bylaws.¹⁰⁴

Majority – means simply "more than half."¹⁰⁵ Thus, on a 15-member board, eight members constitute a majority.

⁹⁷ RRONR (10th ed.), p 390-395.

⁹⁸ *Dingwall v Detroit Common Council*, 82 Mich 568, 571; 46 NW 938 (1890),

⁹⁹ US Const, art I, §3.

¹⁰⁰ RRONR (10th ed.), p 392-393 – an assembly's presiding officer can break or create a tie vote.

¹⁰¹ See OAG, 1981-1982, No 6054, p 617 (April 14, 1982).

¹⁰² *Price v Oakfield Twp Bd*, 182 Mich 216; 148 NW 438 (1914).

¹⁰³ OAG, 1979-1980, No 5606, p 493 (December 13, 1979), citing *Greyhound Corp v Public Service Comm*, 360 Mich 578, 589-590; 104 NW2d 395 (1960). See also, *Cantwell v City of Southfield*, 95 Mich App 375; 290 NW2d 151 (1980).

¹⁰⁴ OAG, 1979-1980, No 5738, p 870 (July 14, 1980). OAG, 2001-2002, No 7081, p 27 (April 17, 2001), citing *Wagner v Ypsilanti Village Clerk*, 302 Mich 636; 5 NW2d 513 (1942).

¹⁰⁵ RRONR (10th ed.), p 387.

Proxy voting – the OMA requires that the deliberation and formulation of decisions effectuating public policy be conducted at open meetings.¹⁰⁶ Voting by proxy effectively forecloses any involvement by the absent board member in the board's public discussion and deliberations before the board votes on a matter effectuating public policy.¹⁰⁷ Without explicit statutory authority, this practice is not allowed.¹⁰⁸

Roll call vote – there is no bright line rule for conducting a roll call vote.¹⁰⁹ We suggest some rules of thumb. One, when a voice vote reveals a divided vote on the board (i.e., more than one no vote), a roll call vote should be conducted to remove doubt about the vote's count. Two, if you have board members participating by teleconference, a roll call will permit the secretary to accurately record the entire vote. Three, when the board is acting on matters of significance, such as, contracts of substantial size or decisions that will have multi-year impacts, a roll call vote is the best choice.

Round-robin voting – means approval for an action outside of a public meeting by passing around a sign-off sheet. This practice has its roots in the legislative committee practice of passing around a tally sheet to gain approval for discharging a bill without a committee meeting. "Round-robinning" defeats the public's right to be present and observe the manner in which the body's decisions are made and violates the letter and the spirit of the OMA.¹¹⁰

Rule of necessity – if a state agency's involvement in prior administrative or judicial proceedings involving a party could require recusal of all of its board members or enough of them to prevent a quorum from assembling, the common law rule of necessity precludes recusing all members, if the disqualification would leave the agency unable to adjudicate a question.¹¹¹ But the rule of necessity may not be applied to allow members of a public body to vote on matters that could benefit their private employer.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ *Esperance v Chesterfield Twp*, 89 Mich App at 464, quoting *Wexford County Prosecutor v Pranger*, 83 Mich App 197; 268 NW2d 344 (1978).

¹⁰⁷ Robert's Rules concur: "Ordinarily it [proxy voting] should neither be allowed nor required, because proxy voting is incompatible with the essential characteristics of a deliberative assembly in which membership is individual, personal, and nontransferable." RRONR (10th ed.), p 414. The Michigan House and Senate do not allow proxy voting for their members.

¹⁰⁸ OAG, 2009-2010, No 7227, p __ (March 19, 2009). OAG, 1993-1994, No 6828, p 212 (December 22, 1994), citing *Dingwall*, 82 Mich at 571, where the city council counted and recorded the vote of absent members in appointing election inspectors. The Michigan Supreme Court rejected these appointments, ruling that "the counting of absent members and recording them as voting in the affirmative on all questions, was also an inexcusable outrage."

¹⁰⁹ "The fact that the Open Meetings Act prohibits secret balloting does not mean that all votes must be roll call votes." *Esperance v Chesterfield Twp*, 89 Mich App at 464 n 9. The OMA does provide that votes to go into closed session must be by roll call. MCL 15.267.

¹¹⁰ OAG, 1977-1978, No 5222, at p 218. See also, *Booth Newspapers*, 444 Mich at 229, which concluded that "round-the-horn" deliberations can constitute decisions under the OMA.

¹¹¹ *Champion's Auto Ferry, Inc v Michigan Public Service Comm*, 231 Mich App 699; 588 NW2d 153 (1998). The Court noted that the PSC members did not have any personal financial interest in the matter. *Id.* at 708-709.

¹¹² OAG, 1981-1982, No 6005, p 439, 446 (November 2, 1981). After OAG No 6005 was issued, the Legislature amended section 2a of 1973 PA 196, MCL 15.342a, to provide a procedure for voting by public officials in some limited circumstances where a quorum is otherwise lacking for a public entity to conduct business.

Secret ballot – the OMA requires that all decisions and deliberations of a public body must be made at an open meeting and the term "decision" is defined to include voting.¹¹³ The OMA prohibits a "voting procedure at a public meeting that prevents citizens from knowing how members of a public body have voted."¹¹⁴ Obviously, the use of a secret ballot process would prevent this transparency. All board decisions subject to the OMA must be made by a public vote at an open meeting.¹¹⁵

Tie vote – a tie vote on a motion means that the motion did not gain a majority. Thus, the motion fails.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ See MCL 15.262(d) and 15.263(2) and (3).

¹¹⁴ OAG, 1977-1978, No 5262, at p 338-339.

¹¹⁵ *Esperance*, 89 Mich App at 464.

¹¹⁶ *Rouse v Rogers*, 267 Mich 338; 255 NW 203 (1934). RRONR (10th ed.), p 392.

OPEN MEETINGS ACT
Act 267 of 1976

AN ACT to require certain meetings of certain public bodies to be open to the public; to require notice and the keeping of minutes of meetings; to provide for enforcement; to provide for invalidation of governmental decisions under certain circumstances; to provide penalties; and to repeal certain acts and parts of acts.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977.

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

15.261 Short title; effect of act on certain charter provisions, ordinances, or resolutions.

Sec. 1. (1) This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Open meetings act".

(2) This act shall supersede all local charter provisions, ordinances, or resolutions which relate to requirements for meetings of local public bodies to be open to the public.

(3) After the effective date of this act, nothing in this act shall prohibit a public body from adopting an ordinance, resolution, rule, or charter provision which would require a greater degree of openness relative to meetings of public bodies than the standards provided for in this act.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977.

15.262 Definitions.

Sec. 2. As used in this act:

(a) "Public body" means any state or local legislative or governing body, including a board, commission, committee, subcommittee, authority, or council, that is empowered by state constitution, statute, charter, ordinance, resolution, or rule to exercise governmental or proprietary authority or perform a governmental or proprietary function; a lessee of such a body performing an essential public purpose and function pursuant to the lease agreement; or the board of a nonprofit corporation formed by a city under section 40 of the home rule city act, 1909 PA 279, MCL 117.40.

(b) "Meeting" means the convening of a public body at which a quorum is present for the purpose of deliberating toward or rendering a decision on a public policy, or any meeting of the board of a nonprofit corporation formed by a city under section 40 of the home rule city act, 1909 PA 279, MCL 117.40.

(c) "Closed session" means a meeting or part of a meeting of a public body that is closed to the public.

(d) "Decision" means a determination, action, vote, or disposition upon a motion, proposal, recommendation, resolution, order, ordinance, bill, or measure on which a vote by members of a public body is required and by which a public body effectuates or formulates public policy.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977;—Am. 2001, Act 38, Imd. Eff. July 11, 2001.

15.263 Meetings, decisions, and deliberations of public body; requirements; attending or addressing meeting of public body; tape-recording, videotaping, broadcasting, and telecasting proceedings; rules and regulations; exclusion from meeting; exemptions.

Sec. 3. (1) All meetings of a public body shall be open to the public and shall be held in a place available to the general public. All persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting except as otherwise provided in this act. The right of a person to attend a meeting of a public body includes the right to tape-record, to videotape, to broadcast live on radio, and to telecast live on television the proceedings of a public body at a public meeting. The exercise of this right shall not be dependent upon the prior approval of the public body. However, a public body may establish reasonable rules and regulations in order to minimize the possibility of disrupting the meeting.

(2) All decisions of a public body shall be made at a meeting open to the public.

(3) All deliberations of a public body constituting a quorum of its members shall take place at a meeting open to the public except as provided in this section and sections 7 and 8.

(4) A person shall not be required as a condition of attendance at a meeting of a public body to register or otherwise provide his or her name or other information or otherwise to fulfill a condition precedent to attendance.

(5) A person shall be permitted to address a meeting of a public body under rules established and recorded by the public body. The legislature or a house of the legislature may provide by rule that the right to address may be limited to prescribed times at hearings and committee meetings only.

(6) A person shall not be excluded from a meeting otherwise open to the public except for a breach of the peace actually committed at the meeting.

(7) This act does not apply to the following public bodies only when deliberating the merits of a case:

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(a) The worker's compensation appeal board created under the worker's disability compensation act of 1969, Act No. 317 of the Public Acts of 1969, as amended, being sections 418.101 to 418.941 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

(b) The employment security board of review created under the Michigan employment security act, Act No. 1 of the Public Acts of the Extra Session of 1936, as amended, being sections 421.1 to 421.73 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

(c) The state tenure commission created under Act No. 4 of the Public Acts of the Extra Session of 1937, as amended, being sections 38.71 to 38.191 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, when acting as a board of review from the decision of a controlling board.

(d) An arbitrator or arbitration panel appointed by the employment relations commission under the authority given the commission by Act No. 176 of the Public Acts of 1939, as amended, being sections 423.1 to 423.30 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

(e) An arbitration panel selected under chapter 50A of the revised judicature act of 1961, Act No. 236 of the Public Acts of 1961, being sections 600.5040 to 600.5065 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

(f) The Michigan public service commission created under Act No. 3 of the Public Acts of 1939, being sections 460.1 to 460.8 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

(8) This act does not apply to an association of insurers created under the insurance code of 1956, Act No. 218 of the Public Acts of 1956, being sections 500.100 to 500.8302 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, or other association or facility formed under Act No. 218 of the Public Acts of 1956 as a nonprofit organization of insurer members.

(9) This act does not apply to a committee of a public body which adopts a nonpolicymaking resolution of tribute or memorial which resolution is not adopted at a meeting.

(10) This act does not apply to a meeting which is a social or chance gathering or conference not designed to avoid this act.

(11) This act shall not apply to the Michigan veterans' trust fund board of trustees or a county or district committee created under Act No. 9 of the Public Acts of the first extra session of 1946, being sections 35.601 to 35.610 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, when the board of trustees or county or district committee is deliberating the merits of an emergent need. A decision of the board of trustees or county or district committee made under this subsection shall be reconsidered by the board or committee at its next regular or special meeting consistent with the requirements of this act. "Emergent need" means a situation which the board of trustees, by rules promulgated under the administrative procedures act of 1969, Act No. 306 of the Public Acts of 1969, as amended, being sections 24.201 to 24.328 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, determines requires immediate action.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977;—Am. 1981, Act 161, Imd. Eff. Nov. 30, 1981;—Am. 1986, Act 269, Imd. Eff. Dec. 19, 1986;—Am. 1988, Act 158, Imd. Eff. June 14, 1988;—Am. 1988, Act 278, Imd. Eff. July 27, 1988.

Administrative rules: R 35.621 of the Michigan Administrative Code.

15.264 Public notice of meetings generally; contents; places of posting.

Sec. 4. The following provisions shall apply with respect to public notice of meetings:

(a) A public notice shall always contain the name of the public body to which the notice applies, its telephone number if one exists, and its address.

(b) A public notice for a public body shall always be posted at its principal office and any other locations considered appropriate by the public body. Cable television may also be utilized for purposes of posting public notice.

(c) If a public body is a part of a state department, part of the legislative or judicial branch of state government, part of an institution of higher education, or part of a political subdivision or school district, a public notice shall also be posted in the respective principal office of the state department, the institution of higher education, clerk of the house of representatives, secretary of the state senate, clerk of the supreme court, or political subdivision or school district.

(d) If a public body does not have a principal office, the required public notice for a local public body shall be posted in the office of the county clerk in which the public body serves and the required public notice for a state public body shall be posted in the office of the secretary of state.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977;—Am. 1984, Act 87, Imd. Eff. Apr. 19, 1984.

15.265 Public notice of regular meetings, change in schedule of regular meetings, rescheduled regular meetings, or special meetings; posting; statement of date, time, and place; website; recess or adjournment; emergency sessions; emergency public meeting; meeting in residential dwelling; limitation; notice; duration requirement.

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Sec. 5. (1) A meeting of a public body shall not be held unless public notice is given as provided in this section by a person designated by the public body.

(2) For regular meetings of a public body, there shall be posted within 10 days after the first meeting of the public body in each calendar or fiscal year a public notice stating the dates, times, and places of its regular meetings.

(3) If there is a change in the schedule of regular meetings of a public body, there shall be posted within 3 days after the meeting at which the change is made, a public notice stating the new dates, times, and places of its regular meetings.

(4) Except as provided in this subsection or in subsection (6), for a rescheduled regular or a special meeting of a public body, a public notice stating the date, time, and place of the meeting shall be posted at least 18 hours before the meeting in a prominent and conspicuous place at both the public body's principal office and, if the public body directly or indirectly maintains an official internet presence that includes monthly or more frequent updates of public meeting agendas or minutes, on a portion of the website that is fully accessible to the public. The public notice on the website shall be included on either the homepage or on a separate webpage dedicated to public notices for nonregularly scheduled public meetings and accessible via a prominent and conspicuous link on the website's homepage that clearly describes its purpose for public notification of those nonregularly scheduled public meetings. The requirement of 18-hour notice does not apply to special meetings of subcommittees of a public body or conference committees of the state legislature. A conference committee shall give a 6-hour notice. A second conference committee shall give a 1-hour notice. Notice of a conference committee meeting shall include written notice to each member of the conference committee and the majority and minority leader of each house indicating time and place of the meeting.

(5) A meeting of a public body that is recessed for more than 36 hours shall be reconvened only after public notice that is equivalent to that required under subsection (4) has been posted. If either house of the state legislature is adjourned or recessed for less than 18 hours, the notice provisions of subsection (4) are not applicable. Nothing in this section bars a public body from meeting in emergency session in the event of a severe and imminent threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the public when 2/3 of the members serving on the body decide that delay would be detrimental to efforts to lessen or respond to the threat. However, if a public body holds an emergency public meeting that does not comply with the 18-hour posted notice requirement, it shall make paper copies of the public notice for the emergency meeting available to the public at that meeting. The notice shall include an explanation of the reasons that the public body cannot comply with the 18-hour posted notice requirement. The explanation shall be specific to the circumstances that necessitated the emergency public meeting, and the use of generalized explanations such as "an imminent threat to the health of the public" or "a danger to public welfare and safety" does not meet the explanation requirements of this subsection. If the public body directly or indirectly maintains an official internet presence that includes monthly or more frequent updates of public meeting agendas or minutes, it shall post the public notice of the emergency meeting and its explanation on its website in the manner described for an internet posting in subsection (4). Within 48 hours after the emergency public meeting, the public body shall send official correspondence to the board of county commissioners of the county in which the public body is principally located, informing the commission that an emergency public meeting with less than 18 hours' public notice has taken place. The correspondence shall also include the public notice of the meeting with explanation and shall be sent by either the United States postal service or electronic mail. Compliance with the notice requirements for emergency meetings in this subsection does not create, and shall not be construed to create, a legal basis or defense for failure to comply with other provisions of this act and does not relieve the public body from the duty to comply with any provision of this act.

(6) A meeting of a public body may only take place in a residential dwelling if a nonresidential building within the boundary of the local governmental unit or school system is not available without cost to the public body. For a meeting of a public body that is held in a residential dwelling, notice of the meeting shall be published as a display advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation in the city or township in which the meeting is to be held. The notice shall be published not less than 2 days before the day on which the meeting is held, and shall state the date, time, and place of the meeting. The notice shall be at the bottom of the display advertisement, set off in a conspicuous manner, and include the following language: "This meeting is open to all members of the public under Michigan's open meetings act".

(7) A durational requirement for posting a public notice of a meeting under this act is the time that the notice is required to be accessible to the public.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977;—Am. 1978, Act 256, Imd. Eff. June 21, 1978;—Am. 1982, Act 134, Imd. Eff. Apr. 22, 1982;—Am. 1984, Act 167, Imd. Eff. June 29, 1984;—Am. 2012, Act 528, Imd. Eff. Dec. 28, 2012.

15.266 Providing copies of public notice on written request; fee.

Sec. 6. (1) Upon the written request of an individual, organization, firm, or corporation, and upon the requesting party's payment of a yearly fee of not more than the reasonable estimated cost for printing and postage of such notices, a public body shall send to the requesting party by first class mail a copy of any notice required to be posted pursuant to section 5(2) to (5).

(2) Upon written request, a public body, at the same time a public notice of a meeting is posted pursuant to section 5, shall provide a copy of the public notice of that meeting to any newspaper published in the state and to any radio and television station located in the state, free of charge.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977.

15.267 Closed sessions; roll call vote; separate set of minutes.

Sec. 7. (1) A 2/3 roll call vote of members elected or appointed and serving is required to call a closed session, except for the closed sessions permitted under section 8(a), (b), (c), (g), (i), and (j). The roll call vote and the purpose or purposes for calling the closed session shall be entered into the minutes of the meeting at which the vote is taken.

(2) A separate set of minutes shall be taken by the clerk or the designated secretary of the public body at the closed session. These minutes shall be retained by the clerk of the public body, are not available to the public, and shall only be disclosed if required by a civil action filed under section 10, 11, or 13. These minutes may be destroyed 1 year and 1 day after approval of the minutes of the regular meeting at which the closed session was approved.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977;—Am. 1993, Act 81, Eff. Apr. 1, 1994;—Am. 1996, Act 464, Imd. Eff. Dec. 26, 1996.

15.268 Closed sessions; permissible purposes.

Sec. 8. A public body may meet in a closed session only for the following purposes:

(a) To consider the dismissal, suspension, or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, or to consider a periodic personnel evaluation of, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent, if the named person requests a closed hearing. A person requesting a closed hearing may rescind the request at any time, in which case the matter at issue shall be considered after the rescission only in open sessions.

(b) To consider the dismissal, suspension, or disciplining of a student if the public body is part of the school district, intermediate school district, or institution of higher education that the student is attending, and if the student or the student's parent or guardian requests a closed hearing.

(c) For strategy and negotiation sessions connected with the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement if either negotiating party requests a closed hearing.

(d) To consider the purchase or lease of real property up to the time an option to purchase or lease that real property is obtained.

(e) To consult with its attorney regarding trial or settlement strategy in connection with specific pending litigation, but only if an open meeting would have a detrimental financial effect on the litigating or settlement position of the public body.

(f) To review and consider the contents of an application for employment or appointment to a public office if the candidate requests that the application remain confidential. However, except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, all interviews by a public body for employment or appointment to a public office shall be held in an open meeting pursuant to this act. This subdivision does not apply to a public office described in subdivision (j).

(g) Partisan caucuses of members of the state legislature.

(h) To consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute.

(i) For a compliance conference conducted by the department of commerce under section 16231 of the public health code, Act No. 368 of the Public Acts of 1978, being section 333.16231 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, before a complaint is issued.

(j) In the process of searching for and selecting a president of an institution of higher education established under section 4, 5, or 6 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963, to review the specific contents of an application, to conduct an interview with a candidate, or to discuss the specific qualifications of a candidate if the particular process of searching for and selecting a president of an institution of higher education meets all of the following requirements:

(i) The search committee in the process, appointed by the governing board, consists of at least 1 student of the institution, 1 faculty member of the institution, 1 administrator of the institution, 1 alumnus of the institution, and 1 representative of the general public. The search committee also may include 1 or more

members of the governing board of the institution, but the number shall not constitute a quorum of the governing board. However, the search committee shall not be constituted in such a way that any 1 of the groups described in this subparagraph constitutes a majority of the search committee.

(ii) After the search committee recommends the 5 final candidates, the governing board does not take a vote on a final selection for the president until at least 30 days after the 5 final candidates have been publicly identified by the search committee.

(iii) The deliberations and vote of the governing board of the institution on selecting the president take place in an open session of the governing board.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977;—Am. 1984, Act 202, Imd. Eff. July 3, 1984;—Am. 1993, Act 81, Eff. Apr. 1, 1994;—Am. 1996, Act 464, Imd. Eff. Dec. 26, 1996.

15.269 Minutes.

Sec. 9. (1) Each public body shall keep minutes of each meeting showing the date, time, place, members present, members absent, any decisions made at a meeting open to the public, and the purpose or purposes for which a closed session is held. The minutes shall include all roll call votes taken at the meeting. The public body shall make any corrections in the minutes at the next meeting after the meeting to which the minutes refer. The public body shall make corrected minutes available at or before the next subsequent meeting after correction. The corrected minutes shall show both the original entry and the correction.

(2) Minutes are public records open to public inspection, and a public body shall make the minutes available at the address designated on posted public notices pursuant to section 4. The public body shall make copies of the minutes available to the public at the reasonable estimated cost for printing and copying.

(3) A public body shall make proposed minutes available for public inspection within 8 business days after the meeting to which the minutes refer. The public body shall make approved minutes available for public inspection within 5 business days after the meeting at which the minutes are approved by the public body.

(4) A public body shall not include in or with its minutes any personally identifiable information that, if released, would prevent the public body from complying with section 444 of subpart 4 of part C of the general education provisions act, 20 USC 1232g, commonly referred to as the family educational rights and privacy act of 1974.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977;—Am. 1982, Act 130, Imd. Eff. Apr. 20, 1982;—Am. 2004, Act 305, Imd. Eff. Aug. 11, 2004.

15.270 Decisions of public body; presumption; civil action to invalidate; jurisdiction; venue; reenactment of disputed decision.

Sec. 10. (1) Decisions of a public body shall be presumed to have been adopted in compliance with the requirements of this act. The attorney general, the prosecuting attorney of the county in which the public body serves, or any person may commence a civil action in the circuit court to challenge the validity of a decision of a public body made in violation of this act.

(2) A decision made by a public body may be invalidated if the public body has not complied with the requirements of section 3(1), (2), and (3) in making the decision or if failure to give notice in accordance with section 5 has interfered with substantial compliance with section 3(1), (2), and (3) and the court finds that the noncompliance or failure has impaired the rights of the public under this act.

(3) The circuit court shall not have jurisdiction to invalidate a decision of a public body for a violation of this act unless an action is commenced pursuant to this section within the following specified period of time:

(a) Within 60 days after the approved minutes are made available to the public by the public body except as otherwise provided in subdivision (b).

(b) If the decision involves the approval of contracts, the receipt or acceptance of bids, the making of assessments, the procedures pertaining to the issuance of bonds or other evidences of indebtedness, or the submission of a borrowing proposal to the electors, within 30 days after the approved minutes are made available to the public pursuant to that decision.

(4) Venue for an action under this section shall be any county in which a local public body serves or, if the decision of a state public body is at issue, in Ingham county.

(5) In any case where an action has been initiated to invalidate a decision of a public body on the ground that it was not taken in conformity with the requirements of this act, the public body may, without being deemed to make any admission contrary to its interest, reenact the disputed decision in conformity with this act. A decision reenacted in this manner shall be effective from the date of reenactment and shall not be declared invalid by reason of a deficiency in the procedure used for its initial enactment.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977.

15.271 Civil action to compel compliance or enjoin noncompliance; commencement; venue; security not required; commencement of action for mandamus; court costs and attorney fees.

Sec. 11. (1) If a public body is not complying with this act, the attorney general, prosecuting attorney of the county in which the public body serves, or a person may commence a civil action to compel compliance or to enjoin further noncompliance with this act.

(2) An action for injunctive relief against a local public body shall be commenced in the circuit court, and venue is proper in any county in which the public body serves. An action for an injunction against a state public body shall be commenced in the circuit court and venue is proper in any county in which the public body has its principal office, or in Ingham county. If a person commences an action for injunctive relief, that person shall not be required to post security as a condition for obtaining a preliminary injunction or a temporary restraining order.

(3) An action for mandamus against a public body under this act shall be commenced in the court of appeals.

(4) If a public body is not complying with this act, and a person commences a civil action against the public body for injunctive relief to compel compliance or to enjoin further noncompliance with the act and succeeds in obtaining relief in the action, the person shall recover court costs and actual attorney fees for the action.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977.

15.272 Violation as misdemeanor; penalty.

Sec. 12. (1) A public official who intentionally violates this act is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than \$1,000.00.

(2) A public official who is convicted of intentionally violating a provision of this act for a second time within the same term shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be fined not more than \$2,000.00, or imprisoned for not more than 1 year, or both.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977.

15.273 Violation; liability.

Sec. 13. (1) A public official who intentionally violates this act shall be personally liable in a civil action for actual and exemplary damages of not more than \$500.00 total, plus court costs and actual attorney fees to a person or group of persons bringing the action.

(2) Not more than 1 action under this section shall be brought against a public official for a single meeting. An action under this section shall be commenced within 180 days after the date of the violation which gives rise to the cause of action.

(3) An action for damages under this section may be joined with an action for injunctive or exemplary relief under section 11.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977.

15.273a Selection of president by governing board of higher education institution; violation; civil fine.

Sec. 13a. If the governing board of an institution of higher education established under section 4, 5, or 6 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963 violates this act with respect to the process of selecting a president of the institution at any time after the recommendation of final candidates to the governing board, as described in section 8(j), the institution is responsible for the payment of a civil fine of not more than \$500,000.00. This civil fine is in addition to any other remedy or penalty under this act. To the extent possible, any payment of fines imposed under this section shall be paid from funds allocated by the institution of higher education to pay for the travel and expenses of the members of the governing board.

History: Add. 1996, Act 464, Imd. Eff. Dec. 26, 1996.

15.274 Repeal of MCL 15.251 to 15.253.

Sec. 14. Act No. 261 of the Public Acts of 1968, being sections 15.251 to 15.253 of the Compiled Laws of 1970, is repealed.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977.

15.275 Effective date.

Sec. 15. This act shall take effect January 1, 1977.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT
Act 442 of 1976

AN ACT to provide for public access to certain public records of public bodies; to permit certain fees; to prescribe the powers and duties of certain public officers and public bodies; to provide remedies and penalties; and to repeal certain acts and parts of acts.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

15.231 Short title; public policy.

Sec. 1. (1) This act shall be known and may be cited as the "freedom of information act".

(2) It is the public policy of this state that all persons, except those persons incarcerated in state or local correctional facilities, are entitled to full and complete information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of those who represent them as public officials and public employees, consistent with this act. The people shall be informed so that they may fully participate in the democratic process.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1994, Act 131, Imd. Eff. May 19, 1994;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997;—Am. 1997, Act 6, Imd. Eff. May 16, 1997.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

15.232 Definitions.

Sec. 2. As used in this act:

(a) "Field name" means the label or identification of an element of a computer data base that contains a specific item of information, and includes but is not limited to a subject heading such as a column header, data dictionary, or record layout.

(b) "FOIA coordinator" means either of the following:

(i) An individual who is a public body.

(ii) An individual designated by a public body in accordance with section 6 to accept and process requests for public records under this act.

(c) "Person" means an individual, corporation, limited liability company, partnership, firm, organization, association, governmental entity, or other legal entity. Person does not include an individual serving a sentence of imprisonment in a state or county correctional facility in this state or any other state, or in a federal correctional facility.

(d) "Public body" means any of the following:

(i) A state officer, employee, agency, department, division, bureau, board, commission, council, authority, or other body in the executive branch of the state government, but does not include the governor or lieutenant governor, the executive office of the governor or lieutenant governor, or employees thereof.

(ii) An agency, board, commission, or council in the legislative branch of the state government.

(iii) A county, city, township, village, intercounty, intercity, or regional governing body, council, school district, special district, or municipal corporation, or a board, department, commission, council, or agency thereof.

(iv) Any other body which is created by state or local authority or which is primarily funded by or through state or local authority.

(v) The judiciary, including the office of the county clerk and employees thereof when acting in the capacity of clerk to the circuit court, is not included in the definition of public body.

(e) "Public record" means a writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created. Public record does not include computer software. This act separates public records into the following 2 classes:

(i) Those that are exempt from disclosure under section 13.

(ii) All public records that are not exempt from disclosure under section 13 and which are subject to disclosure under this act.

(f) "Software" means a set of statements or instructions that when incorporated in a machine usable medium is capable of causing a machine or device having information processing capabilities to indicate, perform, or achieve a particular function, task, or result. Software does not include computer-stored

information or data, or a field name if disclosure of that field name does not violate a software license.

(g) "Unusual circumstances" means any 1 or a combination of the following, but only to the extent necessary for the proper processing of a request:

(i) The need to search for, collect, or appropriately examine or review a voluminous amount of separate and distinct public records pursuant to a single request.

(ii) The need to collect the requested public records from numerous field offices, facilities, or other establishments which are located apart from the particular office receiving or processing the request.

(h) "Writing" means handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating, photographing, photocopying, and every other means of recording, and includes letters, words, pictures, sounds, or symbols, or combinations thereof, and papers, maps, magnetic or paper tapes, photographic films or prints, microfilm, microfiche, magnetic or punched cards, discs, drums, or other means of recording or retaining meaningful content.

(i) "Written request" means a writing that asks for information, and includes a writing transmitted by facsimile, electronic mail, or other electronic means.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1994, Act 131, Imd. Eff. May 19, 1994;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

15.233 Public records; right to inspect, copy, or receive; subscriptions; forwarding requests; file; inspection and examination; memoranda or abstracts; rules; compilation, summary, or report of information; creation of new public record; certified copies.

Sec. 3. (1) Except as expressly provided in section 13, upon providing a public body's FOIA coordinator with a written request that describes a public record sufficiently to enable the public body to find the public record, a person has a right to inspect, copy, or receive copies of the requested public record of the public body. A person has a right to subscribe to future issuances of public records that are created, issued, or disseminated on a regular basis. A subscription shall be valid for up to 6 months, at the request of the subscriber, and shall be renewable. An employee of a public body who receives a request for a public record shall promptly forward that request to the freedom of information act coordinator.

(2) A freedom of information act coordinator shall keep a copy of all written requests for public records on file for no less than 1 year.

(3) A public body shall furnish a requesting person a reasonable opportunity for inspection and examination of its public records, and shall furnish reasonable facilities for making memoranda or abstracts from its public records during the usual business hours. A public body may make reasonable rules necessary to protect its public records and to prevent excessive and unreasonable interference with the discharge of its functions. A public body shall protect public records from loss, unauthorized alteration, mutilation, or destruction.

(4) This act does not require a public body to make a compilation, summary, or report of information, except as required in section 11.

(5) This act does not require a public body to create a new public record, except as required in section 11, and to the extent required by this act for the furnishing of copies, or edited copies pursuant to section 14(1), of an already existing public record.

(6) The custodian of a public record shall, upon written request, furnish a requesting person a certified copy of a public record.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.234 THIS SECTION IS AMENDED EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015: See 15.234.amended *****

15.234 Fee; waiver or reduction; affidavit; deposit; calculation of costs; limitation; provisions inapplicable to certain public records.

Sec. 4. (1) A public body may charge a fee for a public record search, the necessary copying of a public record for inspection, or for providing a copy of a public record. Subject to subsections (3) and (4), the fee shall be limited to actual mailing costs, and to the actual incremental cost of duplication or publication including labor, the cost of search, examination, review, and the deletion and separation of exempt from nonexempt information as provided in section 14. A search for a public record may be conducted or copies of public records may be furnished without charge or at a reduced charge if the public body determines that a waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest because searching for or furnishing copies of the public

record can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public. A public record search shall be made and a copy of a public record shall be furnished without charge for the first \$20.00 of the fee for each request to an individual who is entitled to information under this act and who submits an affidavit stating that the individual is then receiving public assistance or, if not receiving public assistance, stating facts showing inability to pay the cost because of indigency.

(2) A public body may require at the time a request is made a good faith deposit from the person requesting the public record or series of public records, if the fee authorized under this section exceeds \$50.00. The deposit shall not exceed 1/2 of the total fee.

(3) In calculating the cost of labor incurred in duplication and mailing and the cost of examination, review, separation, and deletion under subsection (1), a public body may not charge more than the hourly wage of the lowest paid public body employee capable of retrieving the information necessary to comply with a request under this act. Fees shall be uniform and not dependent upon the identity of the requesting person. A public body shall utilize the most economical means available for making copies of public records. A fee shall not be charged for the cost of search, examination, review, and the deletion and separation of exempt from nonexempt information as provided in section 14 unless failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to the public body because of the nature of the request in the particular instance, and the public body specifically identifies the nature of these unreasonably high costs. A public body shall establish and publish procedures and guidelines to implement this subsection.

(4) This section does not apply to public records prepared under an act or statute specifically authorizing the sale of those public records to the public, or if the amount of the fee for providing a copy of the public record is otherwise specifically provided by an act or statute.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1988, Act 99, Imd. Eff. Apr. 11, 1988;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997.

Constitutionality: The disclosure of public records under the freedom of information act impartially to the general public for the incremental cost of creating the record is not a granting of credit by the state in aid of private persons and does not justify nondisclosure on the theory that the information is proprietary information belonging to a public body. *Kestenbaum v Michigan State University*, 414 Mich 510; 417 NW2d 1102 (1982).

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.234.amended THIS AMENDED SECTION IS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015 *****

15.234.amended Fee; limitation on total fee; labor costs; establishment of procedures and guidelines; creation of written public summary; detailed itemization; availability of information on website; notification to requester; deposit; failure to respond in timely manner; increased estimated fee deposit; deposit as fee.

Sec. 4. (1) A public body may charge a fee for a public record search, for the necessary copying of a public record for inspection, or for providing a copy of a public record if it has established, makes publicly available, and follows procedures and guidelines to implement this section as described in subsection (4). Subject to subsections (2), (3), (4), (5), and (9), the fee shall be limited to actual mailing costs, and to the actual incremental cost of duplication or publication including labor, the cost of search, examination, review, and the deletion and separation of exempt from nonexempt information as provided in section 14. Except as otherwise provided in this act, if the public body estimates or charges a fee in accordance with this act, the total fee shall not exceed the sum of the following components:

(a) That portion of labor costs directly associated with the necessary searching for, locating, and examining of public records in conjunction with receiving and fulfilling a granted written request. The public body shall not charge more than the hourly wage of its lowest-paid employee capable of searching for, locating, and examining the public records in the particular instance regardless of whether that person is available or who actually performs the labor. Labor costs under this subdivision shall be estimated and charged in increments of 15 minutes or more, with all partial time increments rounded down.

(b) That portion of labor costs, including necessary review, if any, directly associated with the separating and deleting of exempt information from nonexempt information as provided in section 14. For services performed by an employee of the public body, the public body shall not charge more than the hourly wage of its lowest-paid employee capable of separating and deleting exempt information from nonexempt information in the particular instance as provided in section 14, regardless of whether that person is available or who actually performs the labor. If a public body does not employ a person capable of separating and deleting exempt information from nonexempt information in the particular instance as provided in section 14 as determined by the public body's FOIA coordinator on a case-by-case basis, it may treat necessary contracted labor costs used for the separating and deleting of exempt information from nonexempt information in the

same manner as employee labor costs when calculating charges under this subdivision if it clearly notes the name of the contracted person or firm on the detailed itemization described under subsection (4). Total labor costs calculated under this subdivision for contracted labor costs shall not exceed an amount equal to 6 times the state minimum hourly wage rate determined under section 4 of the workforce opportunity wage act, 2014 PA 138, MCL 408.411 to 408.424. Labor costs under this subdivision shall be estimated and charged in increments of 15 minutes or more, with all partial time increments rounded down. A public body shall not charge for labor directly associated with redaction under section 14 if it knows or has reason to know that it previously redacted the public record in question and the redacted version is still in the public body's possession.

(c) For public records provided to the requestor on nonpaper physical media, the actual and most reasonably economical cost of the computer discs, computer tapes, or other digital or similar media. The requestor may stipulate that the public records be provided on nonpaper physical media, electronically mailed, or otherwise electronically provided to him or her in lieu of paper copies. This subdivision does not apply if a public body lacks the technological capability necessary to provide records on the particular nonpaper physical media stipulated in the particular instance.

(d) For paper copies of public records provided to the requestor, the actual total incremental cost of necessary duplication or publication, not including labor. The cost of paper copies shall be calculated as a total cost per sheet of paper and shall be itemized and noted in a manner that expresses both the cost per sheet and the number of sheets provided. The fee shall not exceed 10 cents per sheet of paper for copies of public records made on 8-1/2- by 11-inch paper or 8-1/2- by 14-inch paper. A public body shall utilize the most economical means available for making copies of public records, including using double-sided printing, if cost saving and available.

(e) The cost of labor directly associated with duplication or publication, including making paper copies, making digital copies, or transferring digital public records to be given to the requestor on nonpaper physical media or through the internet or other electronic means as stipulated by the requestor. The public body shall not charge more than the hourly wage of its lowest-paid employee capable of necessary duplication or publication in the particular instance, regardless of whether that person is available or who actually performs the labor. Labor costs under this subdivision may be estimated and charged in time increments of the public body's choosing; however, all partial time increments shall be rounded down.

(f) The actual cost of mailing, if any, for sending the public records in a reasonably economical and justifiable manner. The public body shall not charge more for expedited shipping or insurance unless specifically stipulated by the requestor, but may otherwise charge for the least expensive form of postal delivery confirmation when mailing public records.

(2) When calculating labor costs under subsection (1)(a), (b), or (e), fee components shall be itemized in a manner that expresses both the hourly wage and the number of hours charged. The public body may also add up to 50% to the applicable labor charge amount to cover or partially cover the cost of fringe benefits if it clearly notes the percentage multiplier used to account for benefits in the detailed itemization described in subsection (4). Subject to the 50% limitation, the public body shall not charge more than the actual cost of fringe benefits, and overtime wages shall not be used in calculating the cost of fringe benefits. Overtime wages shall not be included in the calculation of labor costs unless overtime is specifically stipulated by the requestor and clearly noted on the detailed itemization described in subsection (4). A search for a public record may be conducted or copies of public records may be furnished without charge or at a reduced charge if the public body determines that a waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest because searching for or furnishing copies of the public record can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public. A public record search shall be made and a copy of a public record shall be furnished without charge for the first \$20.00 of the fee for each request by either of the following:

(a) An individual who is entitled to information under this act and who submits an affidavit stating that the individual is indigent and receiving specific public assistance or, if not receiving public assistance, stating facts showing inability to pay the cost because of indigency. If the requestor is eligible for a requested discount, the public body shall fully note the discount on the detailed itemization described under subsection (4). If a requestor is ineligible for the discount, the public body shall inform the requestor specifically of the reason for ineligibility in the public body's written response. An individual is ineligible for this fee reduction if any of the following apply:

(i) The individual has previously received discounted copies of public records under this subsection from the same public body twice during that calendar year.

(ii) The individual requests the information in conjunction with outside parties who are offering or providing payment or other remuneration to the individual to make the request. A public body may require a statement by the requestor in the affidavit that the request is not being made in conjunction with outside

parties in exchange for payment or other remuneration.

(b) A nonprofit organization formally designated by the state to carry out activities under subtitle C of the developmental disabilities assistance and bill of rights act of 2000, Public Law 106-402, and the protection and advocacy for individuals with mental illness act, Public Law 99-319, or their successors, if the request meets all of the following requirements:

(i) Is made directly on behalf of the organization or its clients.

(ii) Is made for a reason wholly consistent with the mission and provisions of those laws under section 931 of the mental health code, 1974 PA 258, MCL 330.1931.

(iii) Is accompanied by documentation of its designation by the state, if requested by the public body.

(3) A fee as described in subsection (1) shall not be charged for the cost of search, examination, review, and the deletion and separation of exempt from nonexempt information as provided in section 14 unless failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to the public body because of the nature of the request in the particular instance, and the public body specifically identifies the nature of these unreasonably high costs.

(4) A public body shall establish procedures and guidelines to implement this act and shall create a written public summary of the specific procedures and guidelines relevant to the general public regarding how to submit written requests to the public body and explaining how to understand a public body's written responses, deposit requirements, fee calculations, and avenues for challenge and appeal. The written public summary shall be written in a manner so as to be easily understood by the general public. If the public body directly or indirectly administers or maintains an official internet presence, it shall post and maintain the procedures and guidelines and its written public summary on its website. A public body shall make the procedures and guidelines publicly available by providing free copies of the procedures and guidelines and its written public summary both in the public body's response to a written request and upon request by visitors at the public body's office. A public body that posts and maintains procedures and guidelines and its written public summary on its website may include the website link to the documents in lieu of providing paper copies in its response to a written request. A public body's procedures and guidelines shall include the use of a standard form for detailed itemization of any fee amount in its responses to written requests under this act. The detailed itemization shall clearly list and explain the allowable charges for each of the 6 fee components listed under subsection (1) that compose the total fee used for estimating or charging purposes. Other public bodies may use a form created by the department of technology, management, and budget or create a form of their own that complies with this subsection. A public body that has not established procedures and guidelines, has not created a written public summary, or has not made those items publicly available without charge as required in this subsection is not relieved of its duty to comply with any requirement of this act and shall not require deposits or charge fees otherwise permitted under this act until it is in compliance with this subsection. Notwithstanding this subsection and despite any law to the contrary, a public body's procedures and guidelines under this act are not exempt public records under section 13.

(5) If the public body directly or indirectly administers or maintains an official internet presence, any public records available to the general public on that internet site at the time the request is made are exempt from any charges under subsection (1)(b). If the FOIA coordinator knows or has reason to know that all or a portion of the requested information is available on its website, the public body shall notify the requestor in its written response that all or a portion of the requested information is available on its website. The written response, to the degree practicable in the specific instance, shall include a specific webpage address where the requested information is available. On the detailed itemization described in subsection (4), the public body shall separate the requested public records that are available on its website from those that are not available on the website and shall inform the requestor of the additional charge to receive copies of the public records that are available on its website. If the public body has included the website address for a record in its written response to the requestor and the requestor thereafter stipulates that the public record be provided to him or her in a paper format or other form as described under subsection (1)(c), the public body shall provide the public records in the specified format but may use a fringe benefit multiplier greater than the 50% limitation in subsection (2), not to exceed the actual costs of providing the information in the specified format.

(6) A public body may provide requested information available in public records without receipt of a written request.

(7) If a verbal request for information is for information that a public body believes is available on the public body's website, the public employee shall, where practicable and to the best of the public employee's knowledge, inform the requestor about the public body's pertinent website address.

(8) In either the public body's initial response or subsequent response as described under section 5(2)(d), the public body may require a good-faith deposit from the person requesting information before providing the public records to the requestor if the entire fee estimate or charge authorized under this section exceeds

\$50.00, based on a good-faith calculation of the total fee described in subsection (4). Subject to subsection (10), the deposit shall not exceed 1/2 of the total estimated fee, and a public body's request for a deposit shall include a detailed itemization as required under subsection (4). The response shall also contain a best efforts estimate by the public body regarding the time frame it will take the public body to comply with the law in providing the public records to the requestor. The time frame estimate is nonbinding upon the public body, but the public body shall provide the estimate in good faith and strive to be reasonably accurate and to provide the public records in a manner based on this state's public policy under section 1 and the nature of the request in the particular instance. If a public body does not respond in a timely manner as described under section 5(2), it is not relieved from its requirements to provide proper fee calculations and time frame estimates in any tardy responses. Providing an estimated time frame does not relieve a public body from any of the other requirements of this act.

(9) If a public body does not respond to a written request in a timely manner as required under section 5(2), the public body shall do the following:

(a) Reduce the charges for labor costs otherwise permitted under this section by 5% for each day the public body exceeds the time permitted under section 5(2) for a response to the request, with a maximum 50% reduction, if either of the following applies:

(i) The late response was willful and intentional.

(ii) The written request included language that conveyed a request for information within the first 250 words of the body of a letter, facsimile, electronic mail, or electronic mail attachment, or specifically included the words, characters, or abbreviations for "freedom of information", "information", "FOIA", "copy", or a recognizable misspelling of such, or appropriate legal code reference for this act, on the front of an envelope, or in the subject line of an electronic mail, letter, or facsimile cover page.

(b) If a charge reduction is required under subdivision (a), fully note the charge reduction on the detailed itemization described under subsection (4).

(10) This section does not apply to public records prepared under an act or statute specifically authorizing the sale of those public records to the public, or if the amount of the fee for providing a copy of the public record is otherwise specifically provided by an act or statute.

(11) Subject to subsection (12), after a public body has granted and fulfilled a written request from an individual under this act, if the public body has not been paid in full the total amount under subsection (1) for the copies of public records that the public body made available to the individual as a result of that written request, the public body may require a deposit of up to 100% of the estimated fee before it begins a full public record search for any subsequent written request from that individual if all of the following apply:

(a) The final fee for the prior written request was not more than 105% of the estimated fee.

(b) The public records made available contained the information being sought in the prior written request and are still in the public body's possession.

(c) The public records were made available to the individual, subject to payment, within the time frame estimate described under subsection (7).

(d) Ninety days have passed since the public body notified the individual in writing that the public records were available for pickup or mailing.

(e) The individual is unable to show proof of prior payment to the public body.

(f) The public body calculates a detailed itemization, as required under subsection (4), that is the basis for the current written request's increased estimated fee deposit.

(12) A public body shall no longer require an increased estimated fee deposit from an individual as described under subsection (11) if any of the following apply:

(a) The individual is able to show proof of prior payment in full to the public body.

(b) The public body is subsequently paid in full for the applicable prior written request.

(c) Three hundred sixty-five days have passed since the individual made the written request for which full payment was not remitted to the public body.

(13) A deposit required by a public body under this act is a fee.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1988, Act 99, Imd. Eff. Apr. 11, 1988;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997;—Am. 2014, Act 563, Eff. July 1, 2015.

Constitutionality: The disclosure of public records under the freedom of information act impartially to the general public for the incremental cost of creating the record is not a granting of credit by the state in aid of private persons and does not justify nondisclosure on the theory that the information is proprietary information belonging to a public body. *Kestenbaum v Michigan State University*, 414 Mich 510; 417 NW2d 1102 (1982).

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.235 THIS SECTION IS AMENDED EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015: See 15.235.amended *****

15.235 Request to inspect or receive copy of public record; response to request; failure to respond; damages; contents of notice denying request; signing notice of denial; notice extending period of response; action by requesting person.

Sec. 5. (1) Except as provided in section 3, a person desiring to inspect or receive a copy of a public record shall make a written request for the public record to the FOIA coordinator of a public body. A written request made by facsimile, electronic mail, or other electronic transmission is not received by a public body's FOIA coordinator until 1 business day after the electronic transmission is made.

(2) Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the person making the request, a public body shall respond to a request for a public record within 5 business days after the public body receives the request by doing 1 of the following:

- (a) Granting the request.
- (b) Issuing a written notice to the requesting person denying the request.
- (c) Granting the request in part and issuing a written notice to the requesting person denying the request in part.

(d) Issuing a notice extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which the public body shall respond to the request. A public body shall not issue more than 1 notice of extension for a particular request.

(3) Failure to respond to a request pursuant to subsection (2) constitutes a public body's final determination to deny the request. In a circuit court action to compel a public body's disclosure of a public record under section 10, the circuit court shall assess damages against the public body pursuant to section 10(8) if the circuit court has done both of the following:

- (a) Determined that the public body has not complied with subsection (2).
 - (b) Ordered the public body to disclose or provide copies of all or a portion of the public record.
- (4) A written notice denying a request for a public record in whole or in part is a public body's final determination to deny the request or portion of that request. The written notice shall contain:

(a) An explanation of the basis under this act or other statute for the determination that the public record, or portion of that public record, is exempt from disclosure, if that is the reason for denying all or a portion of the request.

(b) A certificate that the public record does not exist under the name given by the requester or by another name reasonably known to the public body, if that is the reason for denying the request or a portion of the request.

(c) A description of a public record or information on a public record that is separated or deleted pursuant to section 14, if a separation or deletion is made.

(d) A full explanation of the requesting person's right to do either of the following:

(i) Submit to the head of the public body a written appeal that specifically states the word "appeal" and identifies the reason or reasons for reversal of the disclosure denial.

(ii) Seek judicial review of the denial under section 10.

(e) Notice of the right to receive attorneys' fees and damages as provided in section 10 if, after judicial review, the circuit court determines that the public body has not complied with this section and orders disclosure of all or a portion of a public record.

(5) The individual designated in section 6 as responsible for the denial of the request shall sign the written notice of denial.

(6) If a public body issues a notice extending the period for a response to the request, the notice shall specify the reasons for the extension and the date by which the public body will do 1 of the following:

- (a) Grant the request.
 - (b) Issue a written notice to the requesting person denying the request.
 - (c) Grant the request in part and issue a written notice to the requesting person denying the request in part.
- (7) If a public body makes a final determination to deny in whole or in part a request to inspect or receive a copy of a public record or portion of that public record, the requesting person may do either of the following:

(a) Appeal the denial to the head of the public body pursuant to section 10.

(b) Commence an action in circuit court, pursuant to section 10.

History: 1976, Act 442, Iff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1978, Act 329, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1978;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Iff. Mar. 31, 1997.

Compiler's note: In subsection (3), the reference to "section 10(8)" evidently should be a reference to "section 10(7)."

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.235.amended THIS AMENDED SECTION IS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015 *****

15.235.amended Request to inspect or receive copy of public record; response to request; failure to respond; damages; contents of notice denying request; signing notice of denial; notice extending period of response; action by requesting person.

Sec. 5. (1) Except as provided in section 3, a person desiring to inspect or receive a copy of a public record shall make a written request for the public record to the FOIA coordinator of a public body. A written request made by facsimile, electronic mail, or other electronic transmission is not received by a public body's FOIA coordinator until 1 business day after the electronic transmission is made. However, if a written request is sent by electronic mail and delivered to the public body's spam or junk-mail folder, the request is not received until 1 day after the public body first becomes aware of the written request. The public body shall note in its records both the time a written request is delivered to its spam or junk-mail folder and the time the public body first becomes aware of that request.

(2) Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the person making the request, a public body shall respond to a request for a public record within 5 business days after the public body receives the request by doing 1 of the following:

- (a) Granting the request.
- (b) Issuing a written notice to the requesting person denying the request.
- (c) Granting the request in part and issuing a written notice to the requesting person denying the request in part.
- (d) Issuing a notice extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which the public body shall respond to the request. A public body shall not issue more than 1 notice of extension for a particular request.

(3) Failure to respond to a request pursuant to subsection (2) constitutes a public body's final determination to deny the request if either of the following applies:

- (a) The failure was willful and intentional.
- (b) The written request included language that conveyed a request for information within the first 250 words of the body of a letter, facsimile, electronic mail, or electronic mail attachment, or specifically included the words, characters, or abbreviations for "freedom of information", "information", "FOIA", "copy", or a recognizable misspelling of such, or appropriate legal code reference to this act, on the front of an envelope or in the subject line of an electronic mail, letter, or facsimile cover page.

(4) In a civil action to compel a public body's disclosure of a public record under section 10, the court shall assess damages against the public body pursuant to section 10(7) if the court has done both of the following:

- (a) Determined that the public body has not complied with subsection (2).
 - (b) Ordered the public body to disclose or provide copies of all or a portion of the public record.
- (5) A written notice denying a request for a public record in whole or in part is a public body's final determination to deny the request or portion of that request. The written notice shall contain:

(a) An explanation of the basis under this act or other statute for the determination that the public record, or portion of that public record, is exempt from disclosure, if that is the reason for denying all or a portion of the request.

(b) A certificate that the public record does not exist under the name given by the requester or by another name reasonably known to the public body, if that is the reason for denying the request or a portion of the request.

(c) A description of a public record or information on a public record that is separated or deleted pursuant to section 14, if a separation or deletion is made.

(d) A full explanation of the requesting person's right to do either of the following:

(i) Submit to the head of the public body a written appeal that specifically states the word "appeal" and identifies the reason or reasons for reversal of the disclosure denial.

(ii) Seek judicial review of the denial under section 10.

(e) Notice of the right to receive attorneys' fees and damages as provided in section 10 if, after judicial review, the court determines that the public body has not complied with this section and orders disclosure of all or a portion of a public record.

(6) The individual designated in section 6 as responsible for the denial of the request shall sign the written notice of denial.

(7) If a public body issues a notice extending the period for a response to the request, the notice shall specify the reasons for the extension and the date by which the public body will do 1 of the following:

- (a) Grant the request.
- (b) Issue a written notice to the requesting person denying the request.

- (c) Grant the request in part and issue a written notice to the requesting person denying the request in part.
- (8) If a public body makes a final determination to deny in whole or in part a request to inspect or receive a copy of a public record or portion of that public record, the requesting person may do either of the following:
 - (a) Appeal the denial to the head of the public body pursuant to section 10.
 - (b) Commence a civil action, pursuant to section 10.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1978, Act 329, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1978;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997;—Am. 2014, Act 563, Eff. July 1, 2015.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

15.236 FOIA coordinator.

Sec. 6. (1) A public body that is a city, village, township, county, or state department, or under the control of a city, village, township, county, or state department, shall designate an individual as the public body's FOIA coordinator. The FOIA coordinator shall be responsible for accepting and processing requests for the public body's public records under this act and shall be responsible for approving a denial under section 5(4) and (5). In a county not having an executive form of government, the chairperson of the county board of commissioners is designated the FOIA coordinator for that county.

(2) For all other public bodies, the chief administrative officer of the respective public body is designated the public body's FOIA coordinator.

(3) An FOIA coordinator may designate another individual to act on his or her behalf in accepting and processing requests for the public body's public records, and in approving a denial under section 5(4) and (5).

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.240 THIS SECTION IS AMENDED EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015: See 15.240.amended *****

15.240 Options by requesting person; appeal; orders; venue; de novo proceeding; burden of proof; private view of public record; contempt; assignment of action or appeal for hearing, trial, or argument; attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements; assessment of award; damages.

Sec. 10. (1) If a public body makes a final determination to deny all or a portion of a request, the requesting person may do 1 of the following at his or her option:

(a) Submit to the head of the public body a written appeal that specifically states the word "appeal" and identifies the reason or reasons for reversal of the denial.

(b) Commence an action in the circuit court to compel the public body's disclosure of the public records within 180 days after a public body's final determination to deny a request.

(2) Within 10 days after receiving a written appeal pursuant to subsection (1)(a), the head of a public body shall do 1 of the following:

(a) Reverse the disclosure denial.

(b) Issue a written notice to the requesting person upholding the disclosure denial.

(c) Reverse the disclosure denial in part and issue a written notice to the requesting person upholding the disclosure denial in part.

(d) Under unusual circumstances, issue a notice extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which the head of the public body shall respond to the written appeal. The head of a public body shall not issue more than 1 notice of extension for a particular written appeal.

(3) A board or commission that is the head of a public body is not considered to have received a written appeal under subsection (2) until the first regularly scheduled meeting of that board or commission following submission of the written appeal under subsection (1)(a). If the head of the public body fails to respond to a written appeal pursuant to subsection (2), or if the head of the public body upholds all or a portion of the disclosure denial that is the subject of the written appeal, the requesting person may seek judicial review of the nondisclosure by commencing an action in circuit court under subsection (1)(b).

(4) In an action commenced under subsection (1)(b), a court that determines a public record is not exempt from disclosure shall order the public body to cease withholding or to produce all or a portion of a public record wrongfully withheld, regardless of the location of the public record. The circuit court for the county in which the complainant resides or has his or her principal place of business, or the circuit court for the county in which the public record or an office of the public body is located has venue over the action. The court shall

determine the matter de novo and the burden is on the public body to sustain its denial. The court, on its own motion, may view the public record in controversy in private before reaching a decision. Failure to comply with an order of the court may be punished as contempt of court.

(5) An action commenced under this section and an appeal from an action commenced under this section shall be assigned for hearing and trial or for argument at the earliest practicable date and expedited in every way.

(6) If a person asserting the right to inspect, copy, or receive a copy of all or a portion of a public record prevails in an action commenced under this section, the court shall award reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements. If the person or public body prevails in part, the court may, in its discretion, award all or an appropriate portion of reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements. The award shall be assessed against the public body liable for damages under subsection (7).

(7) If the circuit court determines in an action commenced under this section that the public body has arbitrarily and capriciously violated this act by refusal or delay in disclosing or providing copies of a public record, the court shall award, in addition to any actual or compensatory damages, punitive damages in the amount of \$500.00 to the person seeking the right to inspect or receive a copy of a public record. The damages shall not be assessed against an individual, but shall be assessed against the next succeeding public body that is not an individual and that kept or maintained the public record as part of its public function.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1978, Act 329, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1978;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.240.amended THIS AMENDED SECTION IS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015 *****

15.240.amended Options by requesting person; appeal; actions by public body; receipt of written appeal; judicial review; civil action; venue; de novo proceeding; burden of proof; private view of public record; contempt; assignment of action or appeal for hearing, trial, or argument; attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements; assessment of award; damages.

Sec. 10. (1) If a public body makes a final determination to deny all or a portion of a request, the requesting person may do 1 of the following at his or her option:

(a) Submit to the head of the public body a written appeal that specifically states the word "appeal" and identifies the reason or reasons for reversal of the denial.

(b) Commence a civil action in the circuit court, or if the decision of a state public body is at issue, the court of claims, to compel the public body's disclosure of the public records within 180 days after a public body's final determination to deny a request.

(2) Within 10 business days after receiving a written appeal pursuant to subsection (1)(a), the head of a public body shall do 1 of the following:

(a) Reverse the disclosure denial.

(b) Issue a written notice to the requesting person upholding the disclosure denial.

(c) Reverse the disclosure denial in part and issue a written notice to the requesting person upholding the disclosure denial in part.

(d) Under unusual circumstances, issue a notice extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which the head of the public body shall respond to the written appeal. The head of a public body shall not issue more than 1 notice of extension for a particular written appeal.

(3) A board or commission that is the head of a public body is not considered to have received a written appeal under subsection (2) until the first regularly scheduled meeting of that board or commission following submission of the written appeal under subsection (1)(a). If the head of the public body fails to respond to a written appeal pursuant to subsection (2), or if the head of the public body upholds all or a portion of the disclosure denial that is the subject of the written appeal, the requesting person may seek judicial review of the nondisclosure by commencing a civil action under subsection (1)(b).

(4) In an action commenced under subsection (1)(b), a court that determines a public record is not exempt from disclosure shall order the public body to cease withholding or to produce all or a portion of a public record wrongfully withheld, regardless of the location of the public record. Venue for an action against a local public body is proper in the circuit court for the county in which the public record or an office of the public body is located has venue over the action. The court shall determine the matter de novo and the burden is on the public body to sustain its denial. The court, on its own motion, may view the public record in controversy in private before reaching a decision. Failure to comply with an order of the court may be punished as contempt of court.

(5) An action commenced under this section and an appeal from an action commenced under this section shall be assigned for hearing and trial or for argument at the earliest practicable date and expedited in every way.

(6) If a person asserting the right to inspect, copy, or receive a copy of all or a portion of a public record prevails in an action commenced under this section, the court shall award reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements. If the person or public body prevails in part, the court may, in its discretion, award all or an appropriate portion of reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements. The award shall be assessed against the public body liable for damages under subsection (7).

(7) If the court determines in an action commenced under this section that the public body has arbitrarily and capriciously violated this act by refusal or delay in disclosing or providing copies of a public record, the court shall order the public body to pay a civil fine of \$1,000.00, which shall be deposited into the general fund of the state treasury. The court shall award, in addition to any actual or compensatory damages, punitive damages in the amount of \$1,000.00 to the person seeking the right to inspect or receive a copy of a public record. The damages shall not be assessed against an individual, but shall be assessed against the next succeeding public body that is not an individual and that kept or maintained the public record as part of its public function.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1978, Act 329, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1978;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997;—Am. 2014, Act 563, Eff. July 1, 2015.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.240a.added THIS ADDED SECTION IS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015 *****

15.240a.added Fee in excess of amount permitted under procedures and guidelines or MCL 15.234.

Sec. 10a. (1) If a public body requires a fee that exceeds the amount permitted under its publicly available procedures and guidelines or section 4, the requesting person may do any of the following:

(a) If the public body provides for fee appeals to the head of the public body in its publicly available procedures and guidelines, submit to the head of the public body a written appeal for a fee reduction that specifically states the word "appeal" and identifies how the required fee exceeds the amount permitted under the public body's available procedures and guidelines or section 4.

(b) Commence a civil action in the circuit court, or if the decision of a state public body is at issue, in the court of claims, for a fee reduction. The action must be filed within 45 days after receiving the notice of the required fee or a determination of an appeal to the head of a public body. If a civil action is commenced against the public body under this subdivision, the public body is not obligated to complete the processing of the written request for the public record at issue until the court resolves the fee dispute. An action shall not be filed under this subdivision unless 1 of the following applies:

(i) The public body does not provide for appeals under subdivision (a).

(ii) The head of the public body failed to respond to a written appeal as required under subsection (2).

(iii) The head of the public body issued a determination to a written appeal as required under subsection (2).

(2) Within 10 business days after receiving a written appeal under subsection (1)(a), the head of a public body shall do 1 of the following:

(a) Waive the fee.

(b) Reduce the fee and issue a written determination to the requesting person indicating the specific basis under section 4 that supports the remaining fee. The determination shall include a certification from the head of the public body that the statements in the determination are accurate and that the reduced fee amount complies with its publicly available procedures and guidelines and section 4.

(c) Uphold the fee and issue a written determination to the requesting person indicating the specific basis under section 4 that supports the required fee. The determination shall include a certification from the head of the public body that the statements in the determination are accurate and that the fee amount complies with the public body's publicly available procedures and guidelines and section 4.

(d) Issue a notice extending for not more than 10 business days the period during which the head of the public body must respond to the written appeal. The notice of extension shall include a detailed reason or reasons why the extension is necessary. The head of a public body shall not issue more than 1 notice of extension for a particular written appeal.

(3) A board or commission that is the head of a public body is not considered to have received a written appeal under subsection (2) until the first regularly scheduled meeting of that board or commission following

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submission of the written appeal under subsection (1)(a).

(4) In an action commenced under subsection (1)(b), a court that determines the public body required a fee that exceeds the amount permitted under its publicly available procedures and guidelines or section 4 shall reduce the fee to a permissible amount. Venue for an action against a local public body is proper in the circuit court for the county in which the public record or an office of the public body is located. The court shall determine the matter de novo, and the burden is on the public body to establish that the required fee complies with its publicly available procedures and guidelines and section 4. Failure to comply with an order of the court may be punished as contempt of court.

(5) An action commenced under this section and an appeal from an action commenced under this section shall be assigned for hearing and trial or for argument at the earliest practicable date and expedited in every way.

(6) If the requesting person prevails in an action commenced under this section by receiving a reduction of 50% or more of the total fee, the court may, in its discretion, award all or an appropriate portion of reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements. The award shall be assessed against the public body liable for damages under subsection (7).

(7) If the court determines in an action commenced under this section that the public body has arbitrarily and capriciously violated this act by charging an excessive fee, the court shall order the public body to pay a civil fine of \$500.00, which shall be deposited in the general fund of the state treasury. The court may also award, in addition to any actual or compensatory damages, punitive damages in the amount of \$500.00 to the person seeking the fee reduction. The fine and any damages shall not be assessed against an individual, but shall be assessed against the next succeeding public body that is not an individual and that kept or maintained the public record as part of its public function.

(8) As used in this section, "fee" means the total fee or any component of the total fee calculated under section 4, including any deposit.

History: Add. 2014, Act 563, Eff. July 1, 2015.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.240b.added THIS ADDED SECTION IS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015 *****

15.240b.added Failure to comply with act; civil fine.

Sec. 10b. If the court determines, in an action commenced under this act, that a public body willfully and intentionally failed to comply with this act or otherwise acted in bad faith, the court shall order the public body to pay, in addition to any other award or sanction, a civil fine of not less than \$2,500.00 or more than \$7,500.00 for each occurrence. In determining the amount of the civil fine, the court shall consider the budget of the public body and whether the public body has previously been assessed penalties for violations of this act. The civil fine shall be deposited in the general fund of the state treasury.

History: Add. 2014, Act 563, Eff. July 1, 2015.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.241 THIS SECTION IS AMENDED EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015: See 15.241.amended *****

15.241 Matters required to be published and made available by state agencies; form of publications; effect on person of matter not published and made available; exception; action to compel compliance by state agency; order; attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements; jurisdiction; definitions.

Sec. 11. (1) A state agency shall publish and make available to the public all of the following:

(a) Final orders or decisions in contested cases and the records on which they were made.

(b) Promulgated rules.

(c) Other written statements which implement or interpret laws, rules, or policy, including but not limited to guidelines, manuals, and forms with instructions, adopted or used by the agency in the discharge of its functions.

(2) Publications may be in pamphlet, loose-leaf, or other appropriate form in printed, mimeographed, or other written matter.

(3) Except to the extent that a person has actual and timely notice of the terms thereof, a person shall not in any manner be required to resort to, or be adversely affected by, a matter required to be published and made available, if the matter is not so published and made available.

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(4) This section does not apply to public records which are exempt from disclosure under section 13.

(5) A person may commence an action in the circuit court to compel a state agency to comply with this section. If the court determines that the state agency has failed to comply, the court shall order the state agency to comply and shall award reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements to the person commencing the action. The circuit court for the county in which the state agency is located shall have jurisdiction to issue the order.

(6) As used in this section, "state agency", "contested case", and "rules" shall have the same meanings as ascribed to those terms in Act No. 306 of the Public Acts of 1969, as amended, being sections 24.201 to 24.315 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

***** 15.241.amended THIS AMENDED SECTION IS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015 *****

15.241.amended Matters required to be published and made available by state agency; form of publications; effect of matter not published and made available; exception; action to compel compliance by state agency; order; attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements; jurisdiction; definitions.

Sec. 11. (1) A state agency shall publish and make available to the public all of the following:

(a) Final orders or decisions in contested cases and the records on which they were made.

(b) Promulgated rules.

(c) Other written statements that implement or interpret laws, rules, or policy, including but not limited to guidelines, manuals, and forms with instructions, adopted or used by the agency in the discharge of its functions.

(2) Publications may be in pamphlet, loose-leaf, or other appropriate form in printed, mimeographed, or other written matter.

(3) Except to the extent that a person has actual and timely notice of the terms thereof, a person is not required to resort to, and shall not be adversely affected by, a matter required to be published and made available, if the matter is not so published and made available.

(4) This section does not apply to public records that are exempt from disclosure under section 13.

(5) A person may commence an action in the court of claims to compel a state agency to comply with this section. If the court determines that the state agency has failed to comply, the court shall order the state agency to comply and shall award reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and disbursements to the person commencing the action. The court of claims has exclusive jurisdiction to issue the order.

(6) As used in this section, "state agency", "contested case", and "rule" mean "agency", "contested case", and "rule" as those terms are defined in the administrative procedures act of 1969, 1969 PA 306, MCL 24.201 to 24.328.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 2014, Act 563, Eff. July 1, 2015.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

15.243 Exemptions from disclosure; public body as school district or public school academy; withholding of information required by law or in possession of executive office.

Sec. 13. (1) A public body may exempt from disclosure as a public record under this act any of the following:

(a) Information of a personal nature if public disclosure of the information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of an individual's privacy.

(b) Investigating records compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that disclosure as a public record would do any of the following:

(i) Interfere with law enforcement proceedings.

(ii) Deprive a person of the right to a fair trial or impartial administrative adjudication.

(iii) Constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

(iv) Disclose the identity of a confidential source, or if the record is compiled by a law enforcement agency in the course of a criminal investigation, disclose confidential information furnished only by a confidential source.

(v) Disclose law enforcement investigative techniques or procedures.

- (vi) Endanger the life or physical safety of law enforcement personnel.
- (c) A public record that if disclosed would prejudice a public body's ability to maintain the physical security of custodial or penal institutions occupied by persons arrested or convicted of a crime or admitted because of a mental disability, unless the public interest in disclosure under this act outweighs the public interest in nondisclosure.
- (d) Records or information specifically described and exempted from disclosure by statute.
- (e) A public record or information described in this section that is furnished by the public body originally compiling, preparing, or receiving the record or information to a public officer or public body in connection with the performance of the duties of that public officer or public body, if the considerations originally giving rise to the exempt nature of the public record remain applicable.
- (f) Trade secrets or commercial or financial information voluntarily provided to an agency for use in developing governmental policy if:
 - (i) The information is submitted upon a promise of confidentiality by the public body.
 - (ii) The promise of confidentiality is authorized by the chief administrative officer of the public body or by an elected official at the time the promise is made.
 - (iii) A description of the information is recorded by the public body within a reasonable time after it has been submitted, maintained in a central place within the public body, and made available to a person upon request. This subdivision does not apply to information submitted as required by law or as a condition of receiving a governmental contract, license, or other benefit.
- (g) Information or records subject to the attorney-client privilege.
- (h) Information or records subject to the physician-patient privilege, the psychologist-patient privilege, the minister, priest, or Christian Science practitioner privilege, or other privilege recognized by statute or court rule.
- (i) A bid or proposal by a person to enter into a contract or agreement, until the time for the public opening of bids or proposals, or if a public opening is not to be conducted, until the deadline for submission of bids or proposals has expired.
- (j) Appraisals of real property to be acquired by the public body until either of the following occurs:
 - (i) An agreement is entered into.
 - (ii) Three years have elapsed since the making of the appraisal, unless litigation relative to the acquisition has not yet terminated.
- (k) Test questions and answers, scoring keys, and other examination instruments or data used to administer a license, public employment, or academic examination, unless the public interest in disclosure under this act outweighs the public interest in nondisclosure.
- (l) Medical, counseling, or psychological facts or evaluations concerning an individual if the individual's identity would be revealed by a disclosure of those facts or evaluation, including protected health information, as defined in 45 CFR 160.103.
- (m) Communications and notes within a public body or between public bodies of an advisory nature to the extent that they cover other than purely factual materials and are preliminary to a final agency determination of policy or action. This exemption does not apply unless the public body shows that in the particular instance the public interest in encouraging frank communication between officials and employees of public bodies clearly outweighs the public interest in disclosure. This exemption does not constitute an exemption under state law for purposes of section 8(h) of the open meetings act, 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.268. As used in this subdivision, "determination of policy or action" includes a determination relating to collective bargaining, unless the public record is otherwise required to be made available under 1947 PA 336, MCL 423.201 to 423.217.
- (n) Records of law enforcement communication codes, or plans for deployment of law enforcement personnel, that if disclosed would prejudice a public body's ability to protect the public safety unless the public interest in disclosure under this act outweighs the public interest in nondisclosure in the particular instance.
- (o) Information that would reveal the exact location of archaeological sites. The department of history, arts, and libraries may promulgate rules in accordance with the administrative procedures act of 1969, 1969 PA 306, MCL 24.201 to 24.328, to provide for the disclosure of the location of archaeological sites for purposes relating to the preservation or scientific examination of sites.
- (p) Testing data developed by a public body in determining whether bidders' products meet the specifications for purchase of those products by the public body, if disclosure of the data would reveal that only 1 bidder has met the specifications. This subdivision does not apply after 1 year has elapsed from the time the public body completes the testing.
- (q) Academic transcripts of an institution of higher education established under section 5, 6, or 7 of article

VIII of the state constitution of 1963, if the transcript pertains to a student who is delinquent in the payment of financial obligations to the institution.

(r) Records of a campaign committee including a committee that receives money from a state campaign fund.

(s) Unless the public interest in disclosure outweighs the public interest in nondisclosure in the particular instance, public records of a law enforcement agency, the release of which would do any of the following:

(i) Identify or provide a means of identifying an informant.

(ii) Identify or provide a means of identifying a law enforcement undercover officer or agent or a plain clothes officer as a law enforcement officer or agent.

(iii) Disclose the personal address or telephone number of active or retired law enforcement officers or agents or a special skill that they may have.

(iv) Disclose the name, address, or telephone numbers of family members, relatives, children, or parents of active or retired law enforcement officers or agents.

(v) Disclose operational instructions for law enforcement officers or agents.

(vi) Reveal the contents of staff manuals provided for law enforcement officers or agents.

(vii) Endanger the life or safety of law enforcement officers or agents or their families, relatives, children, parents, or those who furnish information to law enforcement departments or agencies.

(viii) Identify or provide a means of identifying a person as a law enforcement officer, agent, or informant.

(ix) Disclose personnel records of law enforcement agencies.

(x) Identify or provide a means of identifying residences that law enforcement agencies are requested to check in the absence of their owners or tenants.

(t) Except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, records and information pertaining to an investigation or a compliance conference conducted by the department under article 15 of the public health code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.16101 to 333.18838, before a complaint is issued. This subdivision does not apply to records or information pertaining to 1 or more of the following:

(i) The fact that an allegation has been received and an investigation is being conducted, and the date the allegation was received.

(ii) The fact that an allegation was received by the department; the fact that the department did not issue a complaint for the allegation; and the fact that the allegation was dismissed.

(u) Records of a public body's security measures, including security plans, security codes and combinations, passwords, passes, keys, and security procedures, to the extent that the records relate to the ongoing security of the public body.

(v) Records or information relating to a civil action in which the requesting party and the public body are parties.

(w) Information or records that would disclose the social security number of an individual.

(x) Except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, an application for the position of president of an institution of higher education established under section 4, 5, or 6 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963, materials submitted with such an application, letters of recommendation or references concerning an applicant, and records or information relating to the process of searching for and selecting an individual for a position described in this subdivision, if the records or information could be used to identify a candidate for the position. However, after 1 or more individuals have been identified as finalists for a position described in this subdivision, this subdivision does not apply to a public record described in this subdivision, except a letter of recommendation or reference, to the extent that the public record relates to an individual identified as a finalist for the position.

(y) Records or information of measures designed to protect the security or safety of persons or property, whether public or private, including, but not limited to, building, public works, and public water supply designs to the extent that those designs relate to the ongoing security measures of a public body, capabilities and plans for responding to a violation of the Michigan anti-terrorism act, chapter LXXXIII-A of the Michigan penal code, 1931 PA 328, MCL 750.543a to 750.543z, emergency response plans, risk planning documents, threat assessments, and domestic preparedness strategies, unless disclosure would not impair a public body's ability to protect the security or safety of persons or property or unless the public interest in disclosure outweighs the public interest in nondisclosure in the particular instance.

(2) A public body shall exempt from disclosure information that, if released, would prevent the public body from complying with 20 USC 1232g, commonly referred to as the family educational rights and privacy act of 1974. A public body that is a local or intermediate school district or a public school academy shall exempt from disclosure directory information, as defined by 20 USC 1232g, commonly referred to as the family educational rights and privacy act of 1974, requested for the purpose of surveys, marketing, or solicitation, unless that public body determines that the use is consistent with the educational mission of the

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public body and beneficial to the affected students. A public body that is a local or intermediate school district or a public school academy may take steps to ensure that directory information disclosed under this subsection shall not be used, rented, or sold for the purpose of surveys, marketing, or solicitation. Before disclosing the directory information, a public body that is a local or intermediate school district or a public school academy may require the requester to execute an affidavit stating that directory information provided under this subsection shall not be used, rented, or sold for the purpose of surveys, marketing, or solicitation.

(3) This act does not authorize the withholding of information otherwise required by law to be made available to the public or to a party in a contested case under the administrative procedures act of 1969, 1969 PA 306, MCL 24.201 to 24.328.

(4) Except as otherwise exempt under subsection (1), this act does not authorize the withholding of a public record in the possession of the executive office of the governor or lieutenant governor, or an employee of either executive office, if the public record is transferred to the executive office of the governor or lieutenant governor, or an employee of either executive office, after a request for the public record has been received by a state officer, employee, agency, department, division, bureau, board, commission, council, authority, or other body in the executive branch of government that is subject to this act.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977;—Am. 1978, Act 329, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1978;—Am. 1993, Act 82, Eff. Apr. 1, 1994;—Am. 1996, Act 553, Eff. Mar. 31, 1997;—Am. 2000, Act 88, Imd. Eff. May 1, 2000;—Am. 2001, Act 74, Imd. Eff. July 24, 2001;—Am. 2002, Act 130, Eff. May 1, 2002;—Am. 2002, Act 437, Eff. Aug. 1, 2002;—Am. 2006, Act 482, Imd. Eff. Dec. 22, 2006.

Compiler's note: For transfer of powers and duties of department of history, arts, and libraries or the Michigan historical center relating to the identification, certification, and preservation of historical sites to the Michigan state housing development authority, see E.R.O. No. 2009-26, compiled at MCL 399.752.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

15.243a Salary records of employee or other official of institution of higher education, school district, intermediate school district, or community college available to public on request.

Sec. 13a. Notwithstanding section 13, an institution of higher education established under section 5, 6, or 7 of article 8 of the state constitution of 1963; a school district as defined in section 6 of Act No. 451 of the Public Acts of 1976, being section 380.6 of the Michigan Compiled Laws; an intermediate school district as defined in section 4 of Act No. 451 of the Public Acts of 1976, being section 380.4 of the Michigan Compiled Laws; or a community college established under Act No. 331 of the Public Acts of 1966, as amended, being sections 389.1 to 389.195 of the Michigan Compiled Laws shall upon request make available to the public the salary records of an employee or other official of the institution of higher education, school district, intermediate school district, or community college.

History: Add. 1979, Act 130, Imd. Eff. Oct. 26, 1979.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

15.244 Separation of exempt and nonexempt material; design of public record; description of material exempted.

Sec. 14. (1) If a public record contains material which is not exempt under section 13, as well as material which is exempt from disclosure under section 13, the public body shall separate the exempt and nonexempt material and make the nonexempt material available for examination and copying.

(2) When designing a public record, a public body shall, to the extent practicable, facilitate a separation of exempt from nonexempt information. If the separation is readily apparent to a person requesting to inspect or receive copies of the form, the public body shall generally describe the material exempted unless that description would reveal the contents of the exempt information and thus defeat the purpose of the exemption.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

15.245 Repeal of MCL 24.221, 24.222, and 24.223.

Sec. 15. Sections 21, 22 and 23 of Act No. 306 of the Public Acts of 1969, as amended, being sections 24.221, 24.222 and 24.223 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, are repealed.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

15.246 Effective date.

Sec. 16. This act shall take effect 90 days after being signed by the governor.

History: 1976, Act 442, Eff. Apr. 13, 1977.

Popular name: Act 442

Popular name: FOIA

